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COMMONWEAL

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ACTING OUT IN BOSTON
Robert Dawson

REVIEWS:
Richard Alleva
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ward S. Skillin
vid R. Carlin, Jr.
ul Baumann

SPECIAL SECTION: PAGE 481

COMMONWEAL RE-GENERATING CATHOLICISM

John Coleman • Michael Hunt
Michael Garvey • Kathleen McGarvey Hidy
John Fontana • Lisa Sowle Cahill
Barbara & Ralph Whitehead
John Shea • Editors
John Cusick: Roundtable • Robert Egan

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CORRESPONDENCE

Silly putty

New Haven, Conn.

To the Editors: I'm embarrassed (and amused) by a typo on page 412 of my essay "An Encounter with Lady Poverty" [July 13]. My manuscript reads: "the bronze *putti* in their fountain in the court were glistening and wistful." The printed text says: "the bronze putty in the fountain in the court was glistening and wistful." Wistful putty? Of bronze, no less? I should have italicized *putti*, which is Italian—and English, too, I thought, by acquisition—for those plump little kids who have been cavorting through Western art, lo, these many centuries. Apologies to all baffled readers.

WILLIAM DI CANZIO

From the Editors: Cavorters, yes, and mischief-makers as well, those puttis. *Our apologies to Mr. di Canzio.*

The uses of oversight

Anderson, Calif.

To the Editors: The popular notion that to have effective social service programs we must somehow be free of all public regulation and oversight is, as your May 18 article and editorial on Covenant House point out, a groundless and dangerous concept.

Yes, some regulations are burdensome or even nonsensical. But those of us who deal regularly with public and private grants and contracts are required to account for our expenditures, our budgets, and our programs. The oversight of a bureaucracy forces us to justify our actions, and to reflect on how and why we do what we do. The usual requirement of a certified audit calls on us to disclose how our funds are utilized and to show that there are no conflicts of interest, commingling of assets, or undocumented and improper expenditures.

The frequently expressed fear of "government interference" is more often a cover for personal empire-building than a lesson drawn from experience. Unfortunately there is a mentality that values privacy and independence over the accountability enforced by outside evaluation.

The church through its dioceses and religious communities has a moral (and perhaps canonical) responsibility to provide oversight whenever a priest or religious purports to be doing some unconventional or "Lone Ranger" ministry. Each time a scandal erupts, it does immense damage to the many legitimate and effective agencies that serve the needy.

MICHAEL A. EVANS

Wrong emphasis

East Islip, N.Y.

To the Editors: In your commentary on Cardinal O'Connor's pastoral essay [July 13], the stark reality of 1.4 million abortions a year in this country was unfortunately lost from sight. At a time when the United States, for good or ill, is the lead society for cultural change, your lack of clarity was distressing.

O'Connor's essay addressed the abortion issue in terms of the twenty-three most commonly asked questions about abortion. He offered modest suggestions for select groups: parents, educators, religious, educators, political workers, and health-care, legal, and media professionals. He gave a reasoned, calm presentation, ending with reflections on the nature of Christian love.

Curiously, you seem to have accepted the media "spin" on his work, playing up the sixty-five-word sentence about excommunication of politicians who publicly become abortion advocates, while ignoring the other 19,000 words. You ignored the media's biases as well, and even the clear manifestations of blatantly bigoted Catholic-bashing that took place. That's not the kind of insight or courage to be expected from *Commonweal.*

You refer to the "pain" of some intellectuals and politicians with respect to abortion. But these are grown men and women. The child in the womb is the most defenseless of all human beings—and the most marginal, the most expendable, according to some modern pseudo-ethicists.

You criticize the cardinal for what you consider his "weak presentation" of a "contested concept," the natural law tradition. The tradition may not have universal acceptance but it is essentially sound. In his *Ethics,* that unique, sound, and refreshingly undogmatic book, Aristotle wrote that nowhere else but in human nature can rights be rationally and securely grounded. Surely, not in the muddled thinking of so many media molders of inquiring minds.

RICHARD J. GALLO

The editors reply:

Most U.S. media outlets do show bias in their reporting of the abortion debate. Some of them harbor an anti-Catholic bias as well. All of them, biased or not, find it harder to focus on ideas than on actions or what they perceive as threats of action.

For precisely these reasons, it was wholly predictable that coverage of the pastoral would focus on the section discussing ecclesiastical penalties (which comprises not sixty-five but nearly seven hundred words). As our editorial said, the unfortunate result was to divert attention from Cardinal O'Connor's commendable and partly successful effort to teach why abortion is wrong.

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COMMONWEAL 65

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STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
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Stage: Gerald Weales
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr.
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Elizabeth Ann Fisco, Carmen Alava
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

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Ends & means

George Bush has performed superbly at the tactical level in dealing with the current Middle East crisis, both in organizing the U.S. military deployment and in encouraging a unified world response. But what's it all about? What is our goal? How did we arrive in this situation? For weeks, the president's answers were at best imprecise. We are acting, he said, to defend "our way of life" (meaning an unimpeded flow of petroleum?). We are responding to an assault on "the very essence of international order" (as in Panama?). We are protecting "our world" from "fundamental evil" (that would mandate a massive, even total response).

None of these statements served to define our policy goals or put limits on the military means to achieve them. The president did endorse the goals of Security Council resolutions—release of all hostages, Iraq out of Kuwait, restoration of the legal government. But he did not say that achievement of these ends would satisfy the U.S.

That left the field open, and the experts rushed in—many of them contending that the U.S. must move swiftly, massively, "surgically" to rearrange the map of the Middle East and preordain its future. Time favors Saddam Hussein, we are told, because the embargo *cannot* be long sustained; in any case, merely forcing Iraq out of Kuwait will not prevent future aggression by its leader. Therefore the United States must insure the removal of Saddam Hussein and the destruction of Iraq's capacity for chemical and nuclear warfare. Others argue that our national interest justifies using this opportunity to break the power of the oil cartel; they are willing to trade some hundreds of gallons of American and Iraqi blood for billions of barrels of cheap oil—this because OPEC's pricing practices violate the spirit of free enterprise.

In our view, such goals are unattainable and the suggested means are flatly immoral. The U.S. was justified in acting to deter a possible Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia; the UN acted properly in requiring Iraqi adherence to international law; but to use the crisis for opportunistic overreaching is wrong. And, as of August 28, when he spoke with Congressional leaders, George Bush appears to agree: Absent further provocation, he and his aides indicated, the ouster of Saddam Hussein is not a U.S. objective. According to Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, the president also said that the manner in which the current crisis is resolved will shape world order for decades to come. Whether or not he realized it from the outset, he has helped to create a historic precedent that may foster growing trust in the concept of enforceable world law. That is already an achievement. What remains to be addressed is the remote cause of this crisis: the industrial world's deadly addiction to fossil fuels, all too aptly symbolized by the president's racing about in his speedboat. Even as he worked to preserve the world from war, he was toying, on a small scale, with the planet's future. May a thousand points of light dawn upon him. May they be solar-powered.

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REPORT FROM BOSTON CATHEDRAL

ACT-UP ACTS OUT

CROSSING THE 'REVULSION THRESHOLD'

Eleven men were ordained priests in Boston's Holy Cross Cathedral on June 16. This is usually a joyful day for the ordinals, their families, and for the life of the local church they will serve. This year was different. When the rector of the cathedral arrived early in the morning of the ordination, he found graffiti attacking Cardinal Bernard Law scrawled on the sidewalks. As the procession began, a small group of protestors outside chanted slogans: "Outlaw Cardinal Law!" "Curb your dogma." "2-4-6-8, how do you know your priest is straight?" "You say, 'No F...' We say, 'F... you.'" Some were dressed up in mock episcopal garb and headdress and carried placards: "If I can't have sex, no one else will either."

After the procession entered the cathedral, the doors and windows had to be shut to reduce the noise of the protests. The police stood behind barriers to keep the protestors from entering the church. While the ordination rite proceeded within, outside a man dressed in priest's cassock declaimed a parody of the Sermon on the Mount that made it a paean to sodomy, while others simulated acts of anal and oral sex. Other protestors parodied the Communion rite, holding up condoms and distributing them with the sign of the cross. As the congregation left the cathedral at the end of the service, it was met by shouts of "Shame! Shame!" "Guilty! Guilty!" and pelted with packets of condoms. Protestors surrounded a car they presumed would be used to take Cardinal Law away. In fact, he left by another route.

Some time well after the end of the ceremony, as a young newly ordained priest walked away from the cathedral with his alb hung over one arm and his elderly mother clutching the other, a group of protestors surrounded them pelting them with condoms. The police had to intervene to escort them away. The evening television news showed them walking, with police on either side, as a last protestor threw another condom at them.

The protest was orchestrated by ACT-UP/Boston, aided by busloads of ACT-UP representatives from New York and with the endorsement of some fourteen other groups, most of them organizations supporting gay and lesbian causes, but including the American Association of University Women.

Several things are disturbing—if that is not too mild a word—about all of this. First, a protest allegedly directed against Cardinal Law's policies took the form of an attack on central Catholic doctrines, devotions, and sensitivities. "We're not attacking Catholics or the church," claimed one member of ACT-UP. What then would they think did constitute an attack upon Catholicism? If an obscene parody of the Sermon on the Mount and the substitution of the condom for the Eucharist are not an attack upon Catholic Christianity, what is? Why attack the Eucharist to protest some of the cardinal's policies? Why blaspheme Christ and his teachings?

Second, the *Boston Globe*'s front-page story began with a description of these activities as "colorful, loud—and peaceful." The only other adjectives used, deep within the article, were "boisterous" and "often irreverent." The account made no mention of the vulgar chants, the parodies, or the tossed condoms. No editorial commented on the incident; no columnist thought it worthy of attention. Ten days later the *Globe* published two brief letters. It would be another week before it published an op-ed column of protest by John Walsh, communication director of the archdiocese. Since then, the *Globe* has published three letters in response to the column—all critical—including one from ACT-UP which says it's all a matter of "style."

The *Boston Herald*'s reporter did at least mention that the protestors were "chanting, cursing, and tossing condoms" and referred to the mockery of Communion. Three days later, Margery Eagen of the *Herald* headlined her column, "The anger, compassion of a gay Catholic man" and recounted a horrific story of a priest's indefensible response when the man confessed his homosexual leanings. Still the man remained a Catholic: "Being Catholic is my culture, like being Jewish." "There's a kind of beauty in the faith," he went on, "that people can continue to find even when they are rejected." But, Eagen assured us, "it is not his style to throw condoms outside cathedrals." It would be a week before the *Herald* would print another column, this one taking vigorous exception to the protest. An editorial the same day criticized the "foul tactics" of ACT-UP with an oblique reference to the demonstration at the cathedral.

Is there another minority group in the country which, if similarly assaulted, would be treated in this fashion? Imagine that it had been a solemn Jewish ceremony, or a service in honor of an African-American hero. Imagine also what might be the desecrating equivalent to the actions outside Holy Cross Cathedral. What editorial protests and columnists' cries of outrage would follow in the days, the weeks after? Would anyone be content to think it only a matter of "style"? Would it be considered enough to praise free speech without a word about the degeneration of civil discourse? John J. O'Connor, the *New York Times*' TV critic, recently wrote of "a revulsion threshold" crossed by Andrew Dice Clay, a popular comic, who has made his name by reviling women, homosexuals, blacks, Hispanics, and cripples. To judge from the Boston media's handling of the protest outside the cathedral, that threshold has not yet been crossed when it comes to assaults on Catholics.

Of course, a secular newspaper cannot be expected to use religious language or to refer to the ACT-UP's actions as "blasphemous," much less "satanical," a word I have heard used about the event. But is it too much to expect that reporters and editorialists might, even in their descriptions, have been aware that was going on was an assault upon the deepest beliefs of Catholics?

Third, there was no outcry from the wider public. No political official, no candidate for office, is reported to have uttered the slightest public observation, let alone condemnation. The only comment from a non-Catholic that has been made public was the strong protest of Leonard Zakim, New England regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, who spoke of the "appalling lack of respect for religious freedom

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and for the sanctity of the ordination ceremony"; he hoped that "this horrible incident is an aberration, not the beginning of a new trend of civil disorder." But his statement that "all who care about religious freedom and free speech should be outraged" has still found no public echo from others, even from the heads of Boston's Protestant churches.

All of this took place, of course, on the eve of Gay Pride Week, and its efforts to combat violence, including verbal insult, against homosexuals. No one has pointed out the irony in ACT-UP tactics.

What is going on in all this? Is there a new form of "homophobia" now abroad, a fear of criticizing homosexual activists, no matter how outrageous their behavior? The demonstration went "fabulously," a member of ACT-UP commented. "We have a tremendous amount of momentum." The sad thing is, he may be right.

ROBERT DAWSON

Robert Dawson is a Boston writer.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

WHAT MAKES AN ACT GOOD?

PURE HEARTS VS. GOOD RESULTS

A perennial dispute among moralists has to do with how the rightness or wrongness of an action is to be determined. Do we ascertain this by looking at the motive of the action or at its results?

There is an old, common sense answer to this question, which splits the difference and says that the morality of an action is determined by a mixture of both factors, intentions plus consequences. If I risk my life to rescue a child from a burning building, but do so from motives of vanity (e.g., I hope to become a celebrity on the local TV news), that qualifies as a good deed—though not so good as it would be had it been motivated by humanity or Christian charity with no trace of vanity. Or if my well-intentioned rescue attempt inadvertently causes the death of the child (who, e.g., was about to escape from a window till he heard me calling his name and returned toward the center of the burning building), my guilt will be mitigated or removed by my good motives.

Now you'd think that sensible compromise would settle things. But it doesn't.

From its very beginning, from the moment at least of the Sermon on the Mount, Christianity has taught an ethic of good intentions. It was not enough to refrain from adultery, for example; one had to refrain also from adultery in the heart. The constant moral theme of Jesus is that conformity to the Law, while important, is not sufficient. We must conform in the right spirit, with pure motives, with a heart that loves God and trusts in him. When Jesus told his listeners that they must change their lives, he meant that they must undergo an inner conversion. His ethical goal was not so much to improve conduct as to purify the springs from which conduct flows.

Of the three components of moral action—the motive, the act itself, and the consequences—the Gospels focus almost exclusively on the first, with some incidental attention to the second. What they ignore nearly completely is the third. If ever there was a morality of intention, if ever there was an anticonsequentialist morality ("Consider the lilies of the field...Take no thought for tomorrow..."), such a morality is to be found in the Gospels.

The most uncompromising expression of this anticonsequentialist ethic of intention is given in Kant's celebrated sentence: "It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification except a *good will*."

It was another philosopher, John Stuart Mill, who gave the most uncompromising expression of the consequentialist point of view: "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to produce happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness."

Whatever contemporary philosophers may have to say about the issue, nowadays at the person-in-the-street level consequentialism has the upper hand, while the ethic of intentions, though not extinct, has been thrown far into the shade. There are many reasons for this shift, which has been underway for at least a couple of centuries now; but among them is a decline in the belief in immortality. If I survive death, my character and intentions, whether good or bad, will survive with me; it makes perfect sense, therefore, that I should be greatly concerned in this life about my inner self and its motives, that I may carry into the next life the worthiest character possible. But if there is no life after death, then my actions, by contrast, will survive my death, e.g., in my children, in my children's children, in their children, etc., perhaps down to the end of human time; so now it makes perfect sense that I should concern myself about the consequence of my actions far more than about their motives.

But this is not the end of the story. The trouble with pure consequentialism in ethics is that nobody can accurately predict the long-term results of most actions. When I marry, for instance, that action is full of consequences for any children, grandchildren, etc., that I may eventually have, as well as for the future generations among whom those offspring will live. But absent a crystal ball that really works, how can I tell whether by begetting children I bring more good or evil into the world? In retrospect it was a good thing that the grandparents of Francis of Assisi had children; otherwise there would have been no St. Francis. But what about the grandparents of Adolf Hitler? Obviously the world would have been better off had they remained childless. Or is it obvious? Will the world perhaps eventually be a better place because of the reaction provoked by the monstrous horrors of nazism, because of our determination never to forget, never to let this sort of thing happen again? Who can tell? The only way to be sure is to live until the end of time and

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see how things finally turn out.

So if pure consequentialism doesn't work, where do we go from here? Well, many people have gone to moral agnosticism plus individual choice. That is to say: Since we cannot know most of the consequences of our actions, we have no way, on the consequentialist theory, of telling if those actions are morally good or bad (moral agnosticism); and since we cannot know whether actions are good or bad, we have no right to impose moral rules on others and should thus leave it up to every man and woman to take whatever moral leaps in the dark each may wish to take (individual choice).

The logic of this situation has not fully played itself out yet, but the complete rejection of an ethic of intentions is carrying us toward a state in which there is scant consensus on moral rules. If you view this as pluralism and cultural diversity, you will think it a good thing; if you view it as moral chaos, you will think otherwise. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Paul Baumann

INTIMATELY INTERPOSED

COPING IN MANHATTAN

It was some time in March before I broke down and surrendered my first quarter to a beggar. It was a bitterly cold night, and I was making my way across Broadway to the subway station at 72nd Street. A furtive little man in a filthy knit cap and torn sneakers first solicited me at the curb on the east side of the street. I ignored him. Racing across the street with the traffic light, I hurried out of the cold into the surprising warmth and light of the subway entrance, a mausoleum-like building on the concrete island in the middle of the boulevard. Three or four people were ahead of me at the token line. As I waited, the little man appeared again, presenting his open hand with its blackened and broken nails. He said nothing. Turning away from him with a twinge of paranoia ("Why me?"), I gazed up blankly at the mottled glass near the ceiling—the intermittent light from car headlights gave the windows a burnished glow—until I could buy a token.

Thinking myself free of the man's gentle but eerie persistence, I hurried down the steps to catch the express uptown. A sparse crowd was waiting complaisantly on the platform, a few couples huddled together. Strangers turn away from each other's eyes in New York, hoping to avoid giving offense or excuse to the inevitable loony. Closing your ears is another matter. Across the express tracks on the downtown platform a tall black man, his head wrapped in a red muffler against the cold, was playing a string bass made out of a broom handle and a wash basin. He wore a green army jacket, and sang beautifully. It was a wholly inexplicable sight and sound, a magical juxtaposition of subterranean gloom and fears and the transcendent harmonies of a Gershwin tune. When the little man appeared, like some absurd and portentous symbol in a religious fable, I dropped a quarter into his hand. "Sorry," he said, drifting toward the stairs, "I know I've been pestering you."

I had been working in New York for about a month at that time. With my family still up in Connecticut, I tended to dawdle at the office and rarely ventured out at night. For one thing, it was too cold; the wind that funneled down the streets froze you in your tracks. And I was worried about spending money. I had lived in New York for a brief time after graduating from college, but that, as they say, was a long time ago. During that sojourn I acquired the firm conviction that living in Manhattan with little money was like hating snow and moving to Vermont. Yes, you could survive if you worked at it—there was always Chinatown, or an obscure Ukrainian restaurant, or pizza. But day-to-day existence was exhausting, like living behind enemy lines and not speaking the native language. Still, back then I would have given my first-born child for a decent writing job in New York. Now, of course, I have a first-born child, and a second, and New York seems farther away than ever in some ways.

Before I started at *Commonweal* in February, the *Times* seemed to run an avalanche of stories on the violent decline of the city. There was one about the problem of people urinating in the street. (When my five-year-old son visited New York for the first time this spring he made much of holding his nose in distress.) And always there is the testimony of yet another longtime resident who, after three burglaries and two muggings, finally was moving back "home." I read these with growing apprehension. I was nervous about returning, and knew I couldn't afford to live or raise a family in New York. But I didn't want to retreat before even engaging my fears.

I'm still nervous. But it's been seven months without having to witness any bloodshed or particular barbarity beyond the $2.75 for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich at the local deli. Another cold night found me marching with military bearing up Broadway from the Columbus Circle subway station. As I passed under some elaborate scaffolding on the east side of the street, my way was blocked by a large but indistinct object twenty yards ahead. Once again, music—the signature of New York's public spaces—was in the air. A man bundled up against the cold was playing a baby grand piano on the sidewalk. How did he get there? What did he do with the piano when it was time to go home? Doubtless he disposed of it with a flick of his wand.

At the subway station I often use now, a flute player wearing a Wolfman mask used to be a regular performer, specializing in Vivaldi, along with variations on the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." New York's subways are absurdly crowded during rush hours. You find yourself pressed against perfect strangers in an intimate

The editors, and the many readers who called, extend their condolences to our columnist Abigail McCarthy and the McCarthy family on the death of Mary Abigail McCarthy. May she rest in peace.

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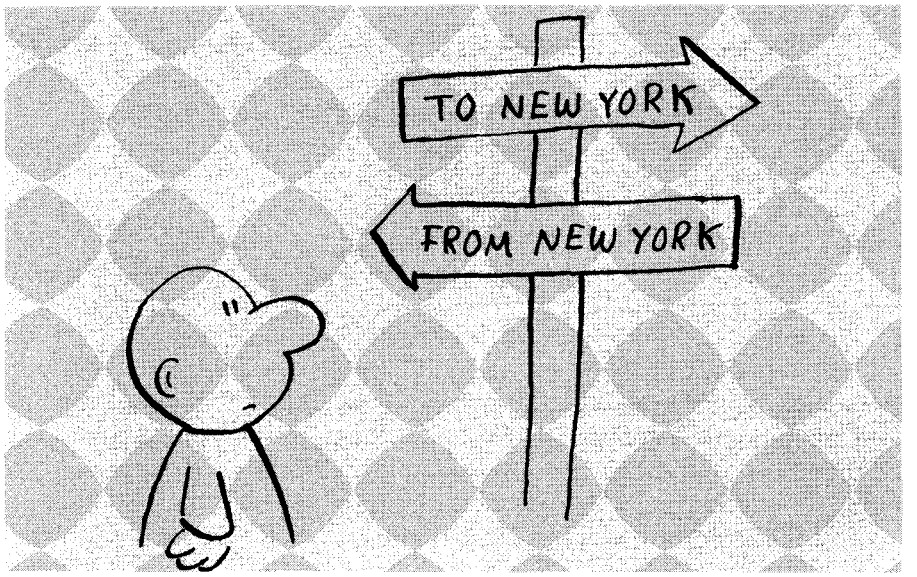
interposing of arms and legs. You come to realize that the city's permissiveness is a matter of necessity: tolerance is the first virtue when people occupy a limited amount of space with those they don't know and probably will never see again. Not that there isn't a degree of romance in all this. Only a lover is likely to brush as close to a woman's cheek or perfumed hair as a routine subway rider does. Of course you are sometimes close to people who emit more of the aroma of a landfill than of Chanel.

No library or monastery demands the strict silence observed on an early morning subway packed with sleepy executives going downtown to work. You keep your head down in solemn stupefaction. I've always wondered who bought all those tasseled loafers. Now I know. New York is also the city of Fu Manchu fingernails. Painted in fuchsia or shades of orange, some of these extended digits seem as long as lacrosse sticks. The most flamboyant ladies decorate their lacquered appendages with tiny sequined designs, miniature and perishable mosaics that seem especially exotic in a nail-biting town like New York.

Subways are also the last place in America where people still read. Newspapers abound, but popular novels and even technical manuals are also staples. And there's plenty of advertising to distract the eye. The truly ubiquitous Jonathan Zizmor, M.D., with a prestigious Park Avenue address, inquires after your unsightly moles and boasts that he is a "Board Certified Dermatologist." A somewhat more somber exhortation begins "No one came to my funeral" and is accompanied by a picture of a body laid out in a morgue. An anonymous identification tag hangs from a big toe. Drugs were the culprit. My favorite is a cartoon soap opera titled "Decision" that appears in both English and Spanish as a warning against AIDS. It's the story of Julio and Marisol's unconsummated passion. Feverishly embracing Marisol, Julio presses her to "prove" her love ("*Vamos, Marisol, prueba que me amas*"), only to storm out of the apartment when she offers him a condom. "I love you, but not enough to die for you," our tearful heroine concludes. Such are the compensations of riding the rails.

There are less edifying sights. One begger without any fingers on the stub of a hand; another man without legs who propels himself through the cars on a skateboard. Early one evening a small group of toughs rushed onto my train in a high state of agitation. One member of the group was cursing loudly and nursing his bleeding knuckles. They were in a state of explosive nervousness in the aftermath of a fight, boasting of their prowess to ward off their fear. On another occasion, this time in the morning, I ended up in the middle of a brawl between a white man and three teenage blacks. As I meekly protested this violence in good *Commonweal* fashion—looking around nervously for a weapon—a large white man stepped between the antagonists and the battle ended.



Beggars continue to solicit my charity; most are direct, a few belligerent. Sometimes I give, sometimes I don't. Like everyone else in New York, I am accustomed to seeing men asleep in subway stations; the few women I see somehow disturb me more. New York is a place that is always rubbing up against you; there is an element of physical intimidation in nearly every human transaction, from the toughs on the street corners, to jockeying for place in the subways and in restaurant and movie lines, to the uniformed doormen in front of the fashionable buildings. Women are more physically vulnerable, and therefore seem to be at greater risk. An adult woman sat across from me on the subway dressed entirely in gray plastic garbage bags, even a plastic bag hat and scarf. She wore the imperturbable expression of a cartoon character who had somehow sprung back to life after being squashed or flattened or shot from a cannon.

Another early morning I was pushed to the back of a subway car where I turned to find a diminutive young woman curled up asleep across two seats. Standing over her, I watched her stomach, slightly exposed by her outfit, rise and fall as she breathed. She was pretty, Hispanic I imagined, and clutched a small purse to her chest. It was unusual in my experience to find a woman asleep on the train. Those of us around her moved to avoid contact when she shifted her position, stretching out a leg or an arm. There was something especially forlorn about her childlike stature and carelessness, but I couldn't quite place it at first. Then I noticed the blunt seam of her pants and realized, with a kind of inexpressible sadness, that her clothes were on inside out.

Our very pleasant office is just blocks from nefarious Wall Street. Most of the buildings at this end of Manhattan are low enough to let the light hit the pavement. Through our skylight you can glimpse the World Trade towers. Around the corner are the oldest Methodist and Catholic churches in the city, and all the crooked streets of buried New Amsterdam seem to lead down to the water's edge. One day early in the summer we had the windows open. Below, around the corner, an itinerant saxophonist was playing "My Favorite Things" and "A Love Supreme" in obvious homage to the great John Coltrane. He played in that bold melancholy vein for a long time, but he wasn't pestering me.

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PATCHING UP THE PEACE IN SYMBOLIC SELMA

RACIAL CONFLICTS STILL SMOLDER

ALSTON FITTS III

This past spring the Alabama River reached its highest level in a hundred years. Selma was one of several Alabama towns that were hit by the flood. Elmwood, the city's oldest cemetery, presented a striking and grisly spectacle: a number of recently buried coffins emerged from the mud and were seen bobbing about on top of the waves.

To some spectators this eerie vision seemed grimly appropriate for a town haunted by racial conflicts the city fathers hoped had been left behind in the 1960s.

In a year full of bitter ironies, plans to stage a biracial celebration of the progress Selma had made since 1965 led to the town's bitterest racial confrontation in twenty-five years. And a campaign against supposed remnants of segregation in the city's public schools seems to be leading to the resegregation of those schools.

This central Alabama town of twenty-six thousand has seen almost daily demonstrations since December 21, 1989, when the Selma School Board voted along racial lines not to renew the contract of the city's first black superintendent, Dr. Norward Roussell. But hostilities had already begun to flare earlier in the fall with a dispute over how best to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the city's involvement in the voting rights movement of 1965.

Mayor Joseph T. Smitherman and the Chamber of Commerce publicly announced plans for a symposium on the significance of Selma's role in the movement, inviting back the newsmen who had covered "Bloody Sunday" and the events of the Selma-to-Montgomery March. Smitherman hoped to showcase the town's progress since 1965, notably its integrated schools (70 percent black, 30 percent white as of September 1989), its black judge and state senator, and so forth. He succeeded in setting up a biracial committee that included the Rev. F.D. Reese, the local leader of the 1965 marches, and Mrs. Sullivan Jackson, the schoolteacher in whose home Dr. King had stayed during the marches.

The mayor's vision might have suited Selma's older black preachers and teachers, but it was promptly challenged by the young activists associated with Chestnut, Sanders, Sanders, Williams, and Pettaway, the largest black law firm in Alabama. This Selma-based firm (locally known as "Chestnut Sanders") was founded in 1971 and led the fight to establish black control of the majority-black counties in West Central Alabama.

The firm includes Rose Gaines Sanders, a charismatic community activist regarded by her admirers as another Joan of Arc, and by her opponents as the Wicked Witch of the South; her husband Hank Sanders, Selma's first black state senator since Reconstruction; and her brother-in-law Perry Varner, one of the county's first black commissioners since Reconstruction.

While "Chestnut Sanders" was not significantly involved in the 1965 protests (the Sanders family didn't arrive in Selma until five years later), the firm regards itself as the keeper of the flame. It had been working toward its own vision of a twenty-fifth anniversary celebration for months. Mrs. Sanders spoke of Hollywood stars who had agreed to come to Selma for a benefit concert to raise money for a voting rights museum to be erected beside the Edmund Pettus Bridge, and a formal banquet to honor the veterans of the 1965 marches. As a climax to this extravaganza, she said, there would be a re-enactment of "Bloody Sunday," March 7, 1965, when nonviolent demonstrators had been beaten and gassed at the Edmund Pettus Bridge. It was her suggestion that white Selmians play the part of George Wallace's state troopers and Sheriff Jim Clark's mounted posse. (This suggestion was coldly received by Selma whites.)

Sanders and her followers were indignant at what they saw as Smitherman's plan to steal "their" celebration. They denounced the mayor as racist and his black appointees as "lackeys," and threatened to bring in demonstrators from around the country to disrupt the symposium.

Efforts were made to work out a compromise between the two groups, allowing both the symposium and the re-creation of the march. But the Sanders group responded like pre-Vatican II Catholics; they were the one true committee, and anybody wishing to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary had to come to their church (First Baptist) and submit to their authority. Their repeated threats and denunciations finally persuaded the mayor's group to withdraw from the field altogether.

The Sanders group then appointed several young whites to serve on their committee, but the dispute left a bad taste in many mouths. It also set the stage for the bitter dispute that erupted last December 21.

The school board's refusal to extend the contract of Dr. Norward Roussell provoked indignation from most Selma blacks. Roussell, who is from New Orleans, was hired by a majority-white board in 1987. He is regarded in the profession as a brilliant

(Continued on page 514)

ALSTON FITTS III *is director of information for the Edmundite Missions in Selma, Alabama.*

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SPECIAL SECTION

COMMONWEAL RE-GENERATING CATHOLICISM

John Coleman • Michael Hunt

Michael Garvey • Kathleen McGarvey Hidy

John Fontana • Lisa Sowle Cahill

Barbara & Ralph Whitehead

John Shea • Editors

John Cusick: Roundtable • Robert Egan

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INTRODUCTION

RE-GENERATING CATHOLICISM
This special issue of *Commonweal* is supported by a special grant from the Catholic Communication Campaign and an anonymous donor.

"Re-Generating Catholicism" is being published in conjunction with a meeting cosponsored by:
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Old St. Patrick's, Chicago,
John Fontana, executive director,
and
The Young Adult Ministry Office
of the Archdiocese of Chicago,
the Rev. John C. Cusick, director.

The meeting will take place **October 5-7** at the Midland Hotel in Chicago.
For further information about the meeting contact: Anne Demke
Re-Generating Catholicism
700 W. Adams St.
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312-782-6171

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212-732-0800

Somewhere in the following pages, one of our authors cites a classic of religious education, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* in order to turn the title inside out and ask: Will our faith have children? No Catholic parent of a certain age—or better, with children of a certain age—will fail to resonate with that insight into our history. Pre-Vatican II Catholics raising children in the post-Vatican II church have had many occasions to reflect, often anxiously, on the first question. Now as those children move into young adulthood, 20-35 years of age, they have other occasions to reflect on the second, and even comtemplate a third: Will our faith have adults?

Twenty-five years after its closing session, the impact of Vatican II presses harder than ever—not only on the present but on the future. Some in the church look at the council's "children" and their hearts sink. In these quarters, unchurched and theologically illiterate young adults confirm all that is said to be wrong with the post-conciliar church. Others celebrate those children—liberated from superstitions, scruples, and a questionable view of human nature—able to happily appropriate what is healthy and constructive in Catholicism. Both views perhaps too readily credit the council for a generation gap and overlook the powerful pull of American culture in absorbing young, educated Catholics into the economic and social mainstream. At last, Catholics have everything immigrant generations worked for—except an immigrant church, vigorous, disciplined, trusted.

RE-GENERATING CATHOLICISM: This special issue of *Commonweal* is prelude to a meeting that will convene leaders of Catholic organizations and young adults in Chicago, October 5-7 (see sidebar for further information), to look at those generational differences and plot a course for bridging them. As at least a few of the following articles point out, some of those differences give cause for hope. Others are a cause for puzzlement and confusion, and still others prompt the bottom-line inquiry: What can those Catholics old enough to have experienced the council, and who still live, sometimes uneasily, sometimes happily, in the Catholic tradition say to those who must appropriate and live in this tradition in the next century?

"We are all the church."

That's been true, if frequently lost from sight, from the beginning. Collegiality, collaboration, and doing the work of the church in the world increasingly depend on the laity and ultimately on these young adult Catholics. Survey data, psychological findings, cultural and economic trends, and even "market analyses" can tell everyone a great deal, but finally not how or why these young adults should continue as bearers of the Catholic tradition. That is the responsibility of older generations of lay men and women and dwindling numbers of clergy and religious who will pass on this tradition by living it honestly and faithfully. Of course, there are stumbling blocks: not the least, all of us.

We live in a tradition rich in paradoxes that can elicit hope in the midst of ambiguities and frustrations. The church is a community and a mystery. Those who see that with the eyes of faith know that the Good News, the encounter with Jesus, the eucharistic gathering, the body of Christ are the deepest reality, but to make these things real in ourselves and in the church, demands a response, a choice each one must make. There must also be a pastoral spirit that invites this choice of faith and there must be a community that tutors and nourishes it. This perennial task, we suggest, may have its greatest challenge in meeting this generation of young Catholics.

THE EDITORS

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YOUNG ADULTS: A LOOK AT THE DEMOGRAPHICS

John A. Coleman

I was irked recently while watching Ted Koppel discussing abortion and Catholic politicians. Just before the commercial break a scroll appeared on the screen with this sight-bite: "By some estimates the Roman Catholic church has lost 25 percent of its members in recent years." By whose estimate? I wondered. Based on what kind of evidence? Referring to what segment of the Catholic population?

In fact, the sight-bite was wrong. The best current data on comparative religious "switching" (Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion*, Rutgers University Press, 1987) shows that Roman Catholicism gains 9.1 percent from conversions while losing 14.5 percent, for a net loss of 5.3 percent. For young adult Catholics, 18-29 years of age, disaffiliation rates run about 15 percent in general and rise to 22 percent in the early married years. (Joan Fee, Andrew Greeley, et al., *Young Catholics*, Sadlier, 1981).

I cite these statistics to signal my intent to sum up what we know statistically about young adult Catholics, information that sometimes goes against the grain of what we think we know. To be sure, there is much we do not know because very little research has been done on this age group. Much wild speculation abounds, for example, that the church is losing large numbers of young Catholics to the evangelicals (not verified, as we shall see). It would be salutary, then, to look at what we really do know about this age group. Young adults should be of special concern to Catholics since, with the exception of those young adults who belong to no church, we have the highest percentage of 18- to 34-year-olds of any religious group in America (see table I, p. 484).

In beginning my search, I asked four knowledgeable sociologist friends where I might find the best statistics on American Catholicism and the most solid sociological information about young Catholics, aged 20-40. They directed me to the data reported in *Young Catholics* (based on National Opinion Research Center [NORC] survey data, but now a decade old) and to a survey of attitudes among a national sample of Catholic college students reported by Dean Hoge in several places, including his book, *The Future of Catholic Leadership* (Sheed and Ward, 1987). I was also directed to the 1989 study, *American Catholic Laity* by William D'Antonio, James Davidson, Dean Hoge, and Ruth Wallace (Sheed and Ward, 1989), and advised to do my own analysis of data on young Catholics contained in the 1988 NORC general social survey. With the help of Richard Wood of the sociology department at Berkeley, I did so. Finally, for comparative purposes, I was urged to check out the research-in-progress of Presbyterian young adults in their thirties, a study focusing on mainline Protestant baby boomers. Preliminary findings from this study (being conducted by Wade Clark Roof as principal investigator) can be found in an article by Kenneth Briggs, "Baby-Boomers: Boom or Bust for the Churches," in *Progressions*, a 1990 Lilly Endowment Report.

I stick closely to these sources in trying to answer the following questions:

1. How do younger Catholics today compare with older Catholics?
2. How do today's young Catholics compare with those of a decade ago?
3. How do those young adults who leave Catholicism compare with: (a) those who stay and (b) those who convert to Catholicism?
4. How do Catholic baby boomers compare with mainline Protestants?

JOHN A. COLEMAN, S.J., *is professor of religion and society at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley.*

Younger and older Catholics

Be warned from the start: What you think you know about young adult Catholics is probably not true, especially if you think that we are worse at retaining them than other religious groups, such as the evangelicals; or that younger Catholics are likely, as they age, to become less practicing than present-day older Catholics.

Table I emphasizes the relatively youthful make-up of Catholicism in contrast to other religious groups. That point is reinforced by *American Catholic Laity*, which was based on a national survey conducted by the Gallup Organization. D'Antonio and his associates report 43 percent are under 35 years of age. Since this is considerably different from mainline Protestant groups, whose population is aging, as well as evangelical-conservative Protestants, what explanation is there for a younger age distribution among Catholics?

Those who answer "a Catholic birthrate higher than the national average" are dead wrong! Catholic birthrates both for those over and under age 45 stand more or less equal to the national average (black and conservative Protestants exceed the national birthrate).

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The chief explanation for the Catholic age distribution is that, whether we work consciously at it or not, we do a better job than other religious groups in holding on to our young adults (at least, insofar as they retain residual loyalties and identification). Catholics actually do slightly better than evangelicals in retaining members under 45 (59 percent vs. 56 percent) and in picking up young converts from other Christian churches (54 percent vs. 50 percent of evangelical converts under 45). The evangelicals, however, do better than Catholics in gaining converts from the ranks of young unchurched Americans. The mean age of a convert from another church to evangelicalism is 47.5; to Catholicism 44.9. Since no one will believe these statistics (don't confuse our stereotypes with facts!), I steer the reader to *American Mainline Religion.*

Table I: Percent distribution of religious groups by age

Family	18-34	35-54	55+
Liberal Protestants	27%	34%	39%
Moderate Protestants	31	32	38
Black Protestants	37	31	32
Conservative Protestants	35	34	31
Catholics	40	34	27
Jews	31	31	38
No religion	59	26	15

Source: American Mainline Religion, p. 153.

Though we do better than any other religious group in retaining people under 45, the commitment and belief of young Catholics do not seem to be as strong as that of older Catholics. *American Catholic Laity* reports that only 37 percent of young adult Catholics (18-29 years of age) say the church is an important part of their lives, compared to 45 percent of 30- to 54-year-old Catholics, and 66 percent of those 55 years or older. Only 42 percent of young adult Catholics say they are unlikely to leave the church, compared to 50 percent of middle-aged Catholics, and 80 percent of older Catholics. Participation rates reveal much the same pattern: 29 percent of young Catholics attend Mass weekly compared to 43 percent of 30- to 54-year-olds, and 63 percent of people 55 and over.

Before we despair over the future of Catholicism, we need to ask whether the dropout or defection rate among young Catholics is primarily a "cohort" or a "life-cycle" phenomenon. Are they gone for good or are they going through a phase? By "life-cycle," sociologists mean that sitting loose with institutional commitments may represent a temporary phenomenon among young adults with a rebound to the church upon marriage and starting a family. The "cohort" explanation argues that a specific age group undergoes a unique historical experience (for example, having come of age during the Great Depression) that precludes the ordinary life-cycle rebound, in this case, to religion.

The authors of *American Catholic Laity* argue that "all other things being equal, the religious attitudes and behavior patterns that young Catholics develop during their formative years [18-29 years of age] tend to persist in their middle years and when they are older." I fault this assumption, which rests on an unproved cohort explanation. Too much lies hidden in the "all other things being equal" phrase, which does not account for the impact of a future spouse's intensity of religious commitment on that of the respondent (such intensity has been shown to be as potent a predictor of religiosity as parental example and practice).

In *Religious Change in America* (Harvard University Press, 1989), Andrew Greeley offers evidence for a life-cycle explanation that also accounts for the longer period of time during which young adults remain "away." He shows that if we control for marriage age (which is higher) and the proportion of the population remaining unmarried (also higher), these two variables alone explain a blip in religious non-affiliation during the 1960s and 1970s, a blip that is now leveling off. Religious non-affiliation rates, in his view, are less a cohort phenomenon than a reflection of the fact that today the young have a longer moratorium than their parents on marriage, family, and institutional commitments—including commitment to the church.

Do younger Catholics differ from the elders on definitions of being a good Catholic? *American Catholic Laity* finds that younger and better-educated Catholics are more insistent on their right to participate in church policy-making, more likely to claim their right to co-determine church policies on sexual morality, and are more permissive in setting boundaries about the definition of a good Catholic. But what leaps less immediately from the tables is the overall agreement on directionality among all age groups (with relatively slight incremental percentage differences) on all the issues about greater democratization in the church, sexual morality, etc. Roughly two-thirds of each age group surveyed thought the church should have more democratic decision making at the parish and diocesan levels. Less than a third agreed with church teaching on divorce, sexual morality, etc. The divide on these issues was not young vs. middle-age and older, but under and over 55.

Much the same pattern can be found in Dean Hoge's research when he compares the attitudes of priests, lay adults, and Catholic college students toward Catholic parish life and leadership, and the priest shortage. Hoge notes that "in every case the attitudes of better-educated, older Catholics resemble the attitudes of younger adult Catholics. A partial reason for this is that younger Catholics have had more formal education than older Catholics." Age, to be sure, made a difference. A high proportion of the sample of college students chose, on most items, the "more liberal" response, significantly more than adults past college age. To cite one example: When asked to choose between a priority of recruiting more priests or of "think[ing] of new ways to structure parish leadership to include more deacons, sisters and lay persons," 74 percent of the college students, 62 percent of lay adults under 39, and 52 percent of adults 40-54 preferred the ministerial restructuring option over the option to recruit more priests. In the sample only the 60-plus age group were in a majority in choosing the more traditional direction on this and many other questions.

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We can conclude, then, in summary form: 1. When compared to older Catholics, young adults are less practicing and less "committed" to the church as an institution. But according to the best evidence, we can not expect this behavior to continue once they get married and start families. Nor should we exaggerate. Even in their early twenties, 48 percent of Protestants and 47 percent of Catholics attend church at least once a month (Catholics are significantly less likely than Protestants, in this age group, to reply "never" when asked about church attendance). As they get older, the rate should increase. Andrew Greeley notes:"The increase, more striking among Catholics [in their 30s], in regular church attendance does not represent the return of the totally alienated but, rather, more regular attendance by the already irregularly attending" (*Religious Change in America*).

2. When compared to older Catholics, young adults are more likely to be unaccepting of church teaching on sexual issues; to be more open to democratic participatory church patterns; to be more permissive about the boundary definitions of what constitutes a good Catholic; and to be more amenable to change in church norms, structure, and organization. Yet, except for the 55-plus age group, what is striking is the great similarity across the spectrum in the direction of the American Catholic laity's thought and attitudes about change in the church.

Another way to test "cohort" vs. "life-cycle" explanations is to compare today's young Catholics with those who were 20-40 a decade ago.

Young Catholics: 1980 and 1990

We are fortunate to have had, ten years ago, a very sophisticated and informative sociological portrait of young Catholics in Joan Fee, Andrew Greeley, William McCready, and Teresa Sullivan's *Young Catholics*, based on NORC data from the late 70s. By analyzing NORC's 1988 data, we can compare that group of 18-29 year olds with today's. Wood and I have done so. But first, under three rubrics, let me cite some of *Young Catholics'* salient findings in 1980.

1. Religious practice: Ten years ago, 29 percent of young Catholics attended church weekly. This was down from 35 percent attendance for the comparable age group in 1972, but higher than that decade's low point of 24 percent in 1976. But on other indices—frequency of private prayer, reported interest in religion, sense of closeness to God—young Catholics in 1980 showed great openness to religion, the religious imagination, and images of hope. At least two-thirds of them had taken part in some religious activity besides Mass or private prayer (for example, reading a spiritual book, taking part in a retreat or in a religious discussion group). Especially when Mass attendance was measured by "several times a month," religious practice reached nearly 50 percent and was better than or comparable to that of their American Protestant or Canadian Catholic age-mates.

2. Defection rates: Ten years ago, defection rates ran 15 percent for young adult Catholics as a whole and 22 percent for those recently married. Over half (57 percent) of those leaving did not join another church, while 25 percent joined a new age religion, and the remainder joined other Christian churches. (Affiliating with another church is likely to be a more definitive and irreversible step than remaining unaffiliated.)

The major variables associated with leaving the church are, in their order of importance: first, a mixed marriage, especially if the non-Catholic spouse is either very devout or very lukewarm about religion—this accounted for 42 percent of the defections; second, low parental religious practice; and third, images of God that were not "warm" or "close." Finally, the most educated young Catholics were also the most likely to leave. (Catholics, however, do better in general than Protestants in retaining their college-educated members as table II demonstrates.)

What about the question of mixed marriages? They are detrimental to Catholic affiliation, as they are to all denominational groups. Moreover, mixed marriages, especially in younger age groups, are increasing in America. Yet the trend for young Catholics to contract mixed marriages in comparison to previous generations of Catholics is relatively weak, especially when compared to the more dramatic increase in interdenominational marriage patterns among Protestants of all ages.

Yet I continuously hear that "everyone knows" that mixed marriages among young Catholics are dramatically on the increase. The fact is, the proportion of Catholics currently living in mixed marriages (about 20 percent) remains stable. The standard work on mixed marriages in America, Robert A. Johnson's, *Religious Associative Patterns* (Praeger, 1985), demonstrates that even though the opportunities for mixed marriage for Catholics have dramatically increased in the last fifty years because of higher social and economic status, the actual rates have not drastically changed. Indeed, Catholics rank with Jews and Baptists as having the highest percentage (among both college and noncollege-educated members) who report that their spouse's current denomination is the same as their own (Wuthnow, *Restructuring of American Religion*).

Table II: Percent of college vs. non-college graduates who leave the denomination in which they were raised

	College-educated Switchers	Non-College Switchers
Catholics	23	15
Lutherans	36	26
Episcopalian	41	35
Presbyterian	47	44
Baptists	33	25
Protestant Sects	50	33

Source: Robert Wuthnow, The Restructuring of American Religion, pp. 332-33.

3. A marital rebound effect: One of *Young Catholics'* major findings pointed to "a tendency for those who have drifted away

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from regular religious practice in their [early] 20s to drift back during their late 20s....The drift back is part of a reintegration which occurs at the time of marriage." Those educated in Catholic schools are the most likely to return to religious practice in the first decade after a Catholic marriage. The evidence clearly points to the fact that one's choice of spouse and the quality of one's parish life are the two principal factors in predicting the religious life of the young married adult.

Young Catholics, 1990: When Richard Wood and I analyzed 1988 NORC data, time and money constraints precluded a full point-by-point comparison with the 18-29 year olds of a decade earlier. Moreover, for purposes of comparison with Roof's Protestant baby boomers study, we also sampled a 20-40 age group and broke that sample into those born before 1963 (baby boomers) and those after (the baby busters).

For this 20-40 Catholic age sample we found 51.4 percent married, 10.8 percent divorced, 3.8 percent separated, and 34.1 percent never married. Young adult Catholic divorce rates do not vary much from the national pattern, or when compared with an older cohort of Catholics. In this 20-40 age sample, 55.4 percent had some college and 24 percent had either completed college or had postgraduate education up to twenty years of schooling. Twenty-eight percent attended Mass nearly every week. This jumped to 49 percent if we included those who attended one, two, or three times a month. We did not find much variance from a decade ago on items measuring respondents' sense of being close to God or reports of having a powerful religious experience. Those married, in our sample, were much more likely than the unmarried to report feelings of closeness to God and powerful religious experience.

When we compared the baby boomers (26-40) with the baby busters (20-25), at first we found a number of statistically significant correlations on some items relating to religious practice and attitudes toward sexual morality, political tolerance, and worldview (for example, "Human nature is basically good vs. basically evil"). But these all washed out when we controlled for marital status, partially reconfirming the marital religious rebound effect, i.e., those in the younger cohort who were married looked more like the older group than like their own. The divorced, in our sample, reported significantly less "closeness to God" or accepting that human nature is basically good.

Our analysis of the 1988 NORC data did uncover, however, some fascinating results when we compared those who were Catholic at age sixteen who switched out of the church vs. those who were non-Catholic at age sixteen who switched into Catholicism. Remember that marrying a Catholic explains about two-thirds of all conversions to Catholicism. For the general Catholic population (all age groups), Catholics lose more than they gain in converts (net loss of about 5 percent). But those who convert are currently much more practicing than Catholics who leave. The mean education and occupational prestige index of Catholic converts is somewhat higher than that of Catholics who leave for another denomination (but not higher than that of Catholics who leave, but do not join another church). The mean education index for Catholic converts is 12.3 vs. 11.9 for cradle Catholics who stay, and 11.8 for Catholics who leave for other denominations. When compared to moderate and conservative Protestants who lose more of the better educated than they gain, in-conversion rates to Catholicism involve a kind of "upward switching" for the church.

What about young Catholics? Wood and I probed these statistics from the 1988 data. Whom do we lose? To whom do we lose them? Whom do we gain and from where?

Those who leave are slightly better educated than stay-put cradle Catholics in the sample. They are also more likely than the stay-puts to rate themselves as extremely liberal or liberal. But, in very significant percentages (25 vs. 11 percent for stay-put Catholics), those who leave say they now never attend church. Again, while about 40 percent of cradle Catholics report attending church two to three times a month (or more), out-converts report a 30 percent rate of attendance in some other church. Those who leave are significantly less likely than cradle Catholics to accept the Bible as the word of God and more likely to call it a book of fables. They are much more likely (42 percent) than cradle Catholic (31 percent) to see people as evil rather than good. They give themselves lower grades as a religious person and are more likely, if married, not to want any more children. Seventy percent of those who leave are or have been married; their divorce-separation rate is significantly higher than the sample Catholic population. We lose a group which is 52.2 percent female and 47.8 percent male. They go out in different directions: 32.6 percent to nonaffiliation, 20.7 percent to moderate Protestant denominations, 18.6 percent to liberal Protestantism, 18.5 percent to evangelical groups, 8.7 percent to nontraditional religions, 1.1 percent to Judaism. Note that young Catholics who leave are not going mainly to evangelical groups; indeed, they are more likely to convert to liberal or moderate Protestantism or to have no affiliation at all. Note also that the percentage of those who join no church has declined from a decade ago.

In sum, we are not losing our best and brightest and, surely, not our most committed and religious. Out-converts are among those who are most liberal, most likely to divorce, and least likely to be practicing compared to Catholics who remain or those who convert into Catholicism.

Whom are we gaining among young converts? The great percentage of young converts to Catholicism are married (61.3 percent), 12.9 percent are divorced, 26 percent have never married (much higher than cradle Catholics, perhaps again a sign that conversion into Catholicism comes mainly through marriage to a Catholic). Fifty-eight percent of converts are women. In-converts have higher median educations than cradle Catholics (25.9 percent college graduate vs. 21.2 percent; and 32.3 percent some college vs. 31.9 percent). While we are losing some of our best educated, we are also gaining better educated converts. The clue here seems to be that higher education is related to proclivity to convert, in either direction.

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Young converts into Catholicism are more likely to describe themselves as moderate or slightly conservative (and less likely to choose the liberal label) than either cradle Catholics or those who leave. Young converts are also more practicing than cradle Catholics (41.7 percent attend Mass at least two to three times a month vs. 37 percent for cradle Catholics). They are just as likely as cradle Catholics to see the human person as more good than evil. But the eye-opener about young converts to Catholicism is where they come from—overwhelmingly from evangelical-fundamentalist groups (45.2 percent), next from liberal Protestantism (35.5 percent) and, finally, from the nonaffiliated (12.9 percent).

Two comments about young converts to Catholicism. First, although we lose more Catholics than we gain through conversions (in a ratio of 5 who leave for every 1.2 who join), we gain more in religious quality than we lose. Second, if anyone should complain about the traffic flow between evangelicals and Catholics, it is the evangelicals. They are more likely to lose adherents to Catholicism than vice versa. This was the most unexpected finding in our analysis of the 1988 young Catholic sample.

The American Catholic church has never commissioned a full-scale national study of Catholic Hispanics. We lack comparable data on Hispanic 20-40 year olds. Fordham sociologist Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J., estimates a 20-25 percent defection rate among all Hispanic Catholics with no appreciable increase from a decade ago. According to Fitzpatrick, Catholic marriages have shown a substantial increase among young New York Hispanics. He thinks that lack of institutional affiliation with any church more than defection to evangelicalism is the major issue among young Hispanics.

Catholic vs. Protestant boomers

Wade Clark Roof's study of 1,400 Presbyterian baby-boomers found that 41 percent of those originally confirmed in that church remained connected to the church, 21 percent returned after dropping-out, one third stayed out. As Kenneth Briggs notes in reporting this data: "Those who go back to [any] church look for two things in particular: religious education for their children and some kind of religious experience that helps make sense of their own lives." Roof notes that congregations which are attentive to young adult themes are "showing lots of ferment."

Returning baby boomers seem to be trying to strike some kind of balance between the religion they knew as youngsters and attention to issues that concern them now. They seek out either conservative or mainline Protestant churches according to how congregations strike that balance. Marriage rebound effect looms large. Baby boomers are finding that it is not easy to be a parent and are now reassessing their own values toward tradition. Those among the Presbyterian baby boomers who have not yet returned, with marriage, seem more numerous in highly urban areas.

At present, I do not have data to compare Catholic baby boomer returnees to these Presbyterian returnees. It is one of the things we would like to know more about our young Catholic adults. But given the comparable educational levels in the two samples, Roof's assessment would likely fit the Catholic sample. Roof's sample seeks a spirituality that helps make sense of their lives. They are less concerned with doctrine than a spirituality for life. " What impresses me," says Roof, "is that many of these people are looking for faith that is related to the modern world. I think there's a new interest in resurrecting the church around young adults who are juggling family, marriage, and career."

Let me conclude with a not totally scientific postscript. There is no good evidence indicating that today's young Catholics represent any less religious potential than those of a decade ago, although their parents who were young adults in the 1940s and 50s are right to be concerned about a lower level of religious practice than they experienced among their own peers. But today, compared to Protestants, Catholics do relatively well in retaining young adults. We do not very successfully mine the pool of non-affiliates (over half of those born unchurched eventually join some church). It is also not clear what effect the graying of the Catholic clergy is having on the quality of parish life, a main ingredient for the return of young Catholics after marriage. The issue may not be that the harvest is not ripe, but that the laborers and organizational response are few and weak.

Clearly, marriage looms large as the key variable for recommitment. Perhaps less focus on stringent and legalistic marriage preparation rules and more programs to help those already married three-to-five years is called for. I would reiterate an injunction of *Young Catholics*: "All organized evangelization efforts [to recapture lapsed Catholics] which do not aim at the family should be abandoned."

Parishes remain the first point of contact for most young adults. I would restate, then, another action recommendation of *Young Catholics*: " Every Catholic parish and diocese in the country should have a program aimed at young adults. The failure to have such a program, for whatever excuse, comes close to irresponsible pastoral leadership."

Finally, a decade late, we might finally heed George Gallup's plea at the beginning of the 1980s. Drawing on his numerous surveys, Gallup found among the young both a strong interest in spirituality and a strong desire for service to society. Why don't the churches, Gallup asked, tap into this gold mine by providing spiritually motivated volunteer programs? The Holy Cross Associates and the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and Outreach programs on college campuses have taken his advice, to excellent effect. Why haven't our dioceses (or regional clusters of them) imitated this example? With a little organizational pluck, the harvest is there for the reaping by some pastorally bold bishops, pastors, and worried parents! □

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GOD ON CAMPUS: STILL THERE, STILL WELCOME

Michael J. Hunt

As the Catholic chaplain at a well-known New England university, I am constantly tasting, if not fully digesting, its highly secular academic diet. As a result, I always approach the days preceding the first Sunday of the fall semester with foreboding. "Will this be the year that no students show up for Mass?" Each year the question haunts me—until that first Sunday arrives and I find myself greeting a chapel filled with students. At that point the question disappears for another twelve months.

My early September worry is based on an assumption, widely shared among academics, other religious ministers, and writers, that religion no longer plays an important role in our secularized culture, especially among the young, and that, where it does survive, it is only a highly personal and private matter. To understand behavior, values, institutions in our culture, in this view, there is no need to consider religion as a principal factor. It may well be of influence in some exotic contemporary societies (Islamic fundamentalism, for example), but in scientific and technological America religion is largely a thing of the past, a spent force.

Hence, my second September question. Given this pervading secularism, why is our chapel filled with students at Mass that first Sunday and all the other Sunday nights of the academic year? Why do colleagues at similar schools report the same phenomenon, with some differences and, of course, some exceptions? And why is it almost always the Catholic worship services that show these large numbers? From the secularist view, surveying all the religious options of modern America, is not Catholicism the most encumbered with the weight of the past, the one that has adapted most sparingly to the "realities" of modern life?

MICHAEL J. HUNT, *a Paulist priest, is the Catholic chaplain at Tufts University. He has also served at Wayne State University, Boston University, and the University of California, Berkeley.*

So what are all those college students up to when they fill the chapel for Sunday Mass?

For starters, as I've learned from listening to them, they are clearly not all doing the same thing. Their reasons for attending range from the most traditional sense of "obligation" (a minuscule minority), to those who stop in once or twice a year out of sentiment, minimal loyalty, or passing curiosity, to those who have just started dating a practicing Catholic, to those who are fully formed and mature Vatican II types (alas, another minority, but not so minuscule). But they do have two things in common. They have some tentatively defined allegiance to the Catholic church, and they show little or no sign of being the highly secularized people of the dominant myth. They believe in God and they pray. They gravitate toward sacraments, especially the Eucharist. They like a good sermon but are patient with lesser quality, unless of the outrageous variety. They see the church as a way to God, maybe even God's way to them, but they do not see the church as an end in itself and they are not very curious about its organizational or institutional aspects. They would love to pray with the pope, and perhaps receive his blessing, but they do not hang on his words or even read what he says.

The religious involvement of these students tends to give first place to their relationship with the divine and, for this bond, they rely on the methods with which they have already become familiar—Sunday Mass and some form of private prayer. They are likely to see these practices as part of their overall efforts to be attentive to other important parts of their lives, including parents and family, friends at other schools, and campus groupings that provide social opportunities. Many, in fact, will chart their patterns of Mass attendance according to the ups and downs of their general behavior. When they are doing well with studies, schedules, and other responsibilities, they also attend Mass. When they periodically become less responsible in these, Mass is more likely to fall by the wayside.

The Catholic students who never or rarely attend Mass usually cite other factors. They will explain that going to church was one of the things that fell away when their parents divorced, or when their family moved, or when they went away to residential secondary school. Frequently such students will describe their parents as nonpracticing Catholics who required them to attend some form of religious education until confirmation and then the whole issue was dropped. Others explain that their parents are of different religions, and that religion was not given a place of importance, either out of indifference or as a *modus vivendi*.

From my experience, I have learned the danger of reading too much theological significance into the nonattendance of many such students. Students from Catholic backgrounds where Mass attendance was not a familiar pattern are far less likely to make it so at the university. But conversations with them often reveal a fairly intact, if not fully developed, belief system. Such conversations do not suggest that their lack of practice is the result of secularization. Most are religious, even prayerful people, but people for whom the church gathering has not been the place to express their faith. At the same time, when the circumstances are welcoming, they often do discover the campus church community as such a place. In recent years I have become aware

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of the growing number of students who describe their families as nonpracticing but who themselves attend Mass regularly. There are, of course, other students who have decided on an explicit personal rejection of their Catholic beliefs; these do tend to fit the requirements of the secularist analysis. In my experience, however, such definitive rejections are uncommon in this age group—as, for that matter, are definitive acceptances.

Why do proponents of the secularization theory—the media as well as academics—miss these realities? One reason is that, along with many ecclesiastical pessimists, the secularists do not look as worship and prayer as indicators of religious behavior, but rather as doctrinal conformity. And, by "doctrinal conformity," these strange bedfellows do not mean agreement on the divinity of Christ or the resurrection of the body, but rather acceptance of Catholic moral teaching, and particularly its teachings on sexual behavior. It is college students' perceived disregard of the church's teachings on sexuality that gives credence and comfort to proponents of secularization, even as it feeds the alarm and despair of ecclesiastical pessimists. And, indeed, it is here that nearly all analysis sets its focus.

Let me make several observations about this. First, there has always been a wide gap between traditional ideals and proscriptions, on the one hand, and the actual behavior of people. Any collection of sermons, from any age of church history, will illustrate how much this disparity between ideal and practice consumed the attention of preachers. To a degree, there is nothing new about the prevalence of sexual activity or experimentation in this age group. What is new, at least in our society, is the unabashed celebration of such sexual activity by commercial and advertising interests, and its ensuing marketing in popular culture. One result is that no one can avoid being confronted with it, and no one is without an opinion. But the behavior itself, while perhaps more common, is not new.

Second, rightly or wrongly, the Catholic church has a very real credibility problem on the issue of sexual morality. My experience bears out the reports of Andrew Greeley on the powerfully negative impact of *Humanae vitae*. While today's students were not around to experience the encyclical and the controversy that ensued, both had a great effect on their parents, their religion teachers, and their priests. As a result, Catholics now speak more tentatively and with much less confidence about the church's authority in matters of sexual morality. And Catholic college students know a lack of confidence when they see it.

But if traditional ethics does not have absolute credibility for these students, neither do any of the proposed alternatives. They have not adopted wholesale complete sexual freedom. "I'm not sure," and "I just don't really know" are the agnostic phrases they employ to discuss the right and wrong of what people used to think was absolutely clear. (The reason so many are instinctively prochoice on abortion has very little to do, I believe, with any positive attitude toward abortion itself. My sense is that it stems from a distaste for the seemingly absolute certitude of the prolife side, especially its confident willingness to try to make its view legally binding on all.)

Third, the traditional restraints have not wholly disappeared. The widespread abuse of alcohol and other drugs among students is best understood, from their own testimony, as often desperate efforts to lower and minimize natural inhibitions about sexual activity. One need not have sympathy for the practice to recognize the presence of some innate (I would say moral) mechanism that must be turned off by chemical means before these individuals feel free to act contrary to traditional norms.

Finally, few of us are inclined to formulate or announce general moral principles as formal guides for our own personal behavior. People begin to feel a need to articulate moral principles when they have a sense of responsibility for others, for some portion of the common good. Parents, teachers, legislators, clergy are routinely in this position, even when they know their own behavior may not be exemplary. College students today generally do not have this experience and do not see themselves as responsible for others. As a result, their moral musings are highly tentative, subjective, and devoid of any aspiration to guide or teach anyone else. What passes among them as a moral principle is most often a statement of fact ("everybody does...") or a description ("people are...").

When measures of "religiousness" other than compliance with church teaching on sexuality are introduced, it becomes difficult (in my view, false) to contend that college students are a totally secularized group for whom transcendent values have disappeared. The religious sense, however vague and unarticulated, remains and students see themselves as part of something greater than what is evident only to the senses, as responsible and accountable even in the privacy of their own thoughts and feelings, and as requiring a bond or connection with the divine. They will readily talk of a certain Mass or a retreat in which they felt especially close to God, and to other people who shared the same spiritual experience. They have what we used to call sacramentals, very often some piece of music, which they will regularly use to remind themselves of these experiences. Some of them are attracted to fundamentalist Christian groups by the clarity and simplicity of their offer of certain truth and salvation.

It is true, of course, that university students are often presented with a highly secularized view of the world. But, like most people, students listen selectively. They distinguish what the professor wants them to give back on an exam from what is applicable to personal beliefs. Such distinctions allow them to appreciate what a professor knows about his or her field and to withhold judgment or assent to what the same professor might think about God, religion, or morality. The same capacity for making distinctions equips them to be more trustful when the church talks about connecting with God through worship and prayer than when it seems to know God's will in specific circumstances. They seem to attach too much importance to their relationship with God to allow it to stand or fall over one issue or one action or one doctrine. At the same time, they hedge their bets, not wanting to be left outside completely, and give a certain presumption to the church's traditions and wisdom. "There must be something to it."

The tenets (or assumptions) of secularism include two that are particularly attractive to people in a university setting, even

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those who are genuinely religious. The first holds that religious differences have a potential for divisive, even explosive harm. Therefore, and this is the second assumption, religious beliefs are best kept private. School authorities, seeing themselves as dealing with "real" differences of race, gender, and class, do not want to allow these important issues to become more clouded or complicated by differences stemming from religious beliefs, which are seen as irrelevant or archaic.

Thus, when I receive a compliment or recognition from academics, it is rarely about my specific ministry as a Catholic chaplain or about the strength of the community that gathers with me; almost always, it is about how well my Unitarian and Jewish colleagues and I work together for common religion. Although such messages are often ecumenically garbed, their aim is not the unity of religious organizations but a reduction of religion into an amalgam so bland no one will have to pay attention.

These efforts to downplay religious differences stand in marked contrast to the contemporary emphasis placed on other differences, those rising out of race, class, and gender. At a freshman orientation session, I heard a professor explain to the incoming students that they were probably as yet unaware of the crucial differences of race and class among themselves but they were about to receive the kind of first-rate education that would make them fully aware of those differences and their consequences. Prior to the beginning of the program, this professor had engaged me in a very knowledgeable conversation about religion and theological developments, so naturally I noted her omission of any reference in her presentation to the differences stemming from the religious identity of the freshmen.

And yet, contrary to these assumptions, the students themselves are very much aware of their religious identities, or lack thereof. It is one of the first things they find out about one another. Like most of us, they would not want to divide their social world into neat religious segments, nor would they make religious differences into rigid social divisions. But when students describe one another, religious identity and the degree of its practice are among the first characteristics they use to describe one another, along with home town and academic major.

What we are seeing here is a discordance between the real world and a particular reading of that world. In its early use, the term "secular" was employed to distinguish something or someone from the "sacred," to indicate those parts of human experience which possess an autonomy of their own. Increasingly that useful distinction has been lost to view, giving way to an ideology which seeks to monitor all public and academic life in an authoritative manner. It claims this role on the basis of its capacity to describe reality as it is lived and experienced in our present demystified world with accuracy and insight. On the basis of its claimed success in neutralizing the archaic antagonisms and divisiveness of religious differences, it asserts a kind of moral authority essential to the common good of what it likes to call a pluralistic society. Secularism, as an ideology, reads the data of our behavior with purported objectivity and claims to see in those data little or no evidence of significant religiously influenced behavior.

In reality, secularism does not correctly understand the larger American society. It is repeatedly surprised by religiously motivated movements and factors that are essential to understanding the American people. The emergence of a politically active fundamentalist movement, the complexity of the various kinds and levels of efforts against abortion, the very large amount of philanthropy for religious organizations, and the sacredness of certain symbols are only some immediate examples of what secularists fail to observe or grasp. As a result, the mass media are not able to report effectively on the significance or origins of these phenomena, nor is much of academia able to teach students about their meaning. The mass media and the academic community are so dependent on each other for information and verification that neither is fully able to hear or see a world larger than and very different from the one assumed in secularist theory.

When I meet women or men who serve in other church ministries and identify myself as a campus minister, I am often met with a gesture of some sympathy because "college students today are so alienated or secularistic, and it must be very hard to work with them." If I mention that many students do practice and that Mass attendance is probably higher among students than in the average parish, I am met with a look of bafflement and wonder. It is at such moments that I realize how much the secularist reading of college students has colored our perceptions, even those of pastoral ministers, leading them to think that not much can done for or with this group. Is this not a large part of the reason why young, single people are ignored or written off in our usual church ministries? Our unconscious acceptance of this reading of young people as hopelessly nonreligious is a pastoral mistake that will exact a terrible cost for the whole community of faith.

There are two competing claimants for my understanding of the students with whom I work. One is the secularist ideology I have attempted to describe and which I find wanting and experientially untrue. The other is the cumulative insights of sociologist Andrew Greeley. His studies and analysis maintain that a pervasive religious sensibility exists in American society, especially among young people. While Greeley shows that this religious vitality does not always fit the exact parameters of doctrinal correctness, I am sure that, had it been possible, similar studies of Catholics in the fourth or fourteenth centuries would not have yielded more doctrinal exactness. Greeley's studies and my more random observations, however, ought not be construed as an invitation to complacency. In fact, they point to a formidable challenge for the church's ministry. They also urge us to reexamine many of our common assumptions about the religious situation of the young people with whom we seek to communicate.

Ironically, one of the most significant effects of the ideology of secularism may be that it strongly colors the church's own perception of one of its most important groups. I believe it does just that. As my annual fall worries attest, I am not immune from this influence, even though I know from repeated experience that among college students today religious sensibility, a sense

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of the divine, a desire for a close relationship with God in worship and in prayer, and an allegiance, albeit without sharp definition, to the Catholic tradition and community of faith, are all present. Though these elements tend to vacillate across a broad spectrum of practice and involvement, their presence marks the starting point for the church's understanding of its own future. □

NEEDED: A DOSE OF RADICAL DESPAIR

Michael O. Garvey

As do so many other victims of a hopelessly ordinary life, I often suspect that some serious mistake has been made. I'm not *supposed* to be in this particular situation, jogging around this particular Indiana subdivision, listening to Motown oldies on the Walkman earphones and thinking about the eye infection that our dog picked up somewhere. I'm *supposed* to be tenderly explaining to a tearful Meryl Streep that our relationship wouldn't really *be* free if it required the fracture of a marital vow, and that deep down inside, she knows she would love me less if I were to abandon my wife and children, however briefly, for some South American joyride; asking her what future there could really be for a couple like us. I'm supposed to be with Secretary of State James Baker at one of those furtive Washington meetings to which I'm frequently summoned, indignantly saying that he's damn right I'm not his kind of patriot but that, yes, I *will* undertake this top-secret mission, because his cowboys would only screw it up, and that could result in the deaths of Romanian children, not to mention the fact that Kathleen Turner, on her own, couldn't possibly get through the first checkpoint.

So when my father recently sent me an incomprehensible flowchart tracing our ancestry back into the depths of sixteenth-century Ireland, I expected to be dazzled by litanies of Irish Catholic heroes and heroines who had done all sorts of astonishing and glorious things. With a present so bereft of significance and a future promising not much more than a dunning notice from our veterinarian, the glory had to be in the past. Which is why I was so startled to read, in my dad's introductory note: "Here is proof of your direct descent from John Garvey, the Protestant archbishop of Armagh, who, in the interest of personal security and preferential advancement, abandoned the Roman church, died in 1594, and is buried in Christ Church, Dublin." This couldn't be. I'd always assumed that our family had been Catholic since before the time of Moses. I was soon further dismayed to discover that five years before Great x 10 or so Grandpa Garvey died, he had written an eloquent denunciation of the Council of Trent, alerting the flock of "these Her Majesties Realms" to such papist decrees as "that Excommunication or a perpetual Curse light upon the Families of all those of the Mother Church who will not promote or assist by means of Money, or otherwise, *Mary* Queen of *Scotland* to the Crown of *England* and that under-hand they propose a Match for the Queen of some *Catholick Roman* King or Prince; or if she dye, to set up *Mary* Queen of *Scotland*, or some other *Romish* Prince, for the advancement of the Mother Church." But at some point on our way to twentieth-century America, most of us returned to the "Romish Bloody paths" that had John of Armagh in such a snit.

Did we ever. According to one family legend, my eccentric great aunt Letitia, who would be the Protestant archbishop of Armagh's great times-however-many granddaughter, used to fusillade each helping of her mashed potatoes with rosary beads. Her dad nearly lost his job as a telegrapher with the Erie Railroad for refusing to let his work schedule interfere with Sunday Mass and devotions, and her nephew's passionate faith so suffused my own upbringing that I couldn't figure out how to leave the Catholic church if I wanted to.

Now all these folks, from the archbishop of Armagh and sometime primate of all Ireland to the bead-munching old lady to this distracted Hoosier suburbanite have had to work out their salvation in fear and trembling within and over against distinctive families and communities and cultures. It's difficult to gauge the integrity and worth of the cultural network which presented itself to John of Armagh as the whore of Babylon, to Aunt Letitia as a source of condiment, and to me as a distraction from an imaginary fling with a screen goddess. I don't mean to be flippant, exactly, but as much as I worry, and I do worry a lot, about the vanishing of distinctively Catholic cultural forms in America, I wonder how well those forms served my forebears in other countries and times and how much, finally, they really matter.

They do matter, of course. The responsibility of young adult Catholics today is what the responsibility of Catholics young and old has always been: to be witnesses in the world of God's kingdom, which is in, but not of, the world. In order to be such witnesses we have to keep in touch with each other, love, live, and bear with each other, and, most importantly, die for each other. We can't do any of these things without dying to ourselves and we can't die to ourselves without Jesus, who came so that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him. Given that assignment, it isn't so amazing that we prefer late-night TV. To

MICHAEL O. GARVEY, *a columnist for the* National Catholic Reporter, *works in the Public Relations and Information office at the University of Notre Dame.*

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mount a very hopeful or even interesting campaign against the world, the flesh, and the devil, we need a counterculture, and to develop a counterculture we need first of all to remind ourselves and each other that the culture in which we and our kids are embedded is as rapacious as it is goofy.

I'm not saying that we all ought to march out to Idaho to join the survivalists, but concern for the interweaving of religion and culture can be overdone. Gordon Zahn, in his disturbing and magisterial *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars,* writes about the colorful Rhineland festival in which throngs of costumed children annually follow an equestrian representing Saint Martin of Tours, "the glory of Gaul and a light to the Western church of the fourth century," begging treats from delighted onlookers much as our own kids do at Halloween. The festival celebrates the extravagance of Saint Martin's charity, that El Greco painting scene in which Saint Martin chops his cape in half to clothe Christ in the beggar's guise. But Saint Martin is also a patron saint of draft resistance, and Zahn observes the paradox that "thousands of German Catholics who as young boys had marched in the gay processions honoring the conscientious objector to Julian's war had grown into men who willingly responded to the call to march in Hitler's wars of conquest." Among the millions of Catholic males who were called upon to defend *Volk* and *Vaterland* in ways that make us shudder today, Zahn could learn of no more than seven who refused. Six were executed and one was placed in an insane asylum, and the church was silent. Secularism is pretty powerful stuff. Funky as the feast of Saint Martin might be, and nostalgic as anyone wants to get about it, this distinctively Catholic contribution to a national culture couldn't even help Rhenish Catholics become martyrs. That's about as negligible as a contribution gets.

I don't think the pre- and-post-Vatican II Catholic church I grew up in could do or has done much better. Today and here, young adult Catholics are swept up in the historical forces of a much different time. The peculiarly American pluralism, affluence, and relativism which our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents were obliged to regard with suspicion and contempt don't seem so scary to us. Of course, the surgeon general's warning on a cigarette pack doesn't seem so scary to a teenage boy who wants to look tough either. America in 1990 isn't exactly the Rhineland in 1939, but then it isn't exactly the wedding feast at Cana. For all sorts of complicated reasons that we are constantly tut-tutted for being hysterical about, we destroy those children we don't feel like raising; we can't manage to get out of the habit of flattening countries whose governments irritate us; we control (or think we do) recorded history's most enormous and complicated communications technology, but all we can get the damn thing to do is multiply our appetites and trivialize our dreams. And do you know what my wife, children, and I heard a sermon about at Mass this very morning? Dancing is what.

Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann called secularism a lie about the world. For Catholics in America, where it seems to be the established religion, secularism has become especially difficult to fight because so many of us seem to believe the lie. We seem to believe that we have an abiding city here. R.O.T.C. and MBA programs flourish on the campuses of Catholic colleges and universities, because it is obvious that Catholics are free and even obligated to become captains of infantry and industry; our ethicists burn the midnight oil to figure out new ways to justify what powerful people want to do because it is assumed that Catholics ought to become powerful people; our bishops shell out upwards of 34 million bucks on their corporate headquarters and talk about hiring Hill & Knowlton and the Wirthlin Group to clear up this abortion thing because that's how you do things downtown; our theologians and religious seem increasingly reluctant to mention God in public but will "go whoring after relevance," calling a press conference at the drop of a hat to denounce this or that hierarchical abuse of authority; our elementary schools certainly suffer from a quite justifiable hemorrhage of cheap labor—there are fewer and less docile women religious—but they suffer every bit as much from the reluctance of thirty-something Catholic parents to make the same financial sacrifices their parents did. Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. We tend to be more supportive of (and reliant on) our local National Public Radio affiliates than our local Catholic schools. We Catholics, when you shuck right down to the corn, are just about indistinguishable from all the other nice people in North American society.

We've become increasingly unable to form a community of sufficient conviction to question or even mildly startle modernity because we have such a stake in it. We can't really complain about something which we permit, so we go along and get along, as our seminaries increasingly attract effeminate and unconvinced young men, our liturgies grow frivolous and shallow, our kids are socialized by television, and our consumerism outpaces our longing for the One Thing Necessary.

Sure we'll take a little time out for Sunday Mass, sitting through another irritating liturgy and another stupefying homily with a few other Irish, Italian, Polish, and Mexican families. And we'll admirably sponsor and participate in the work of soup kitchens and homeless centers and AIDS hospices and Catholic Worker houses and battered women shelters and recycling programs and third-world development projects, but that's just good citizenship. Even Unitarians do as much, and nobody knows what they believe in. What distinguishes our community from theirs?

Well, we might say, the Eucharist does. We believe and act on our belief that one specific human being, Jesus, is the son of Mary and the Son of God and that he has conquered the world and is present among us as this particular fragment of bread and this particular cup of wine, giving himself to us as food until he comes again in glory. "There is," as Robert Imbelli wrote recently in *Commonweal* [April 6], "simply no Christian faith without the density of real presence." But it doesn't look very much as if we believe that. A dear cousin of mine who is trying to raise his children as Catholics wrote me a sympathetic letter recently, describing the godawful Newman Center on which their family relied. "Liturgy and doctrine," he concluded, "are closely related and both are supposed to prefigure heaven. In the new church it is a place where we all hold hands and sing old Cat Stevens's songs." I chuckled when I read that, but only a little.

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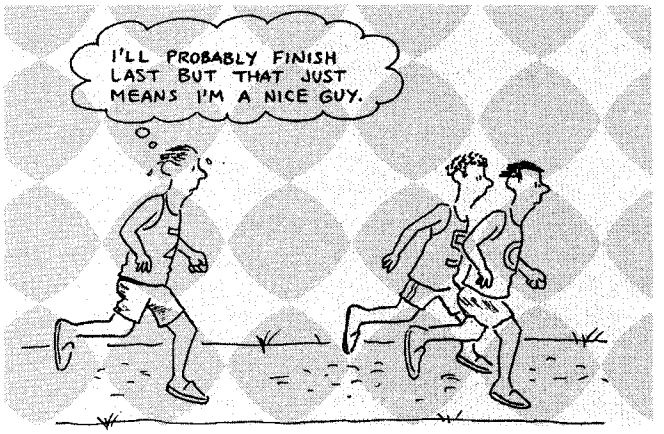
I lack a doctoral degree in liturgy, but will somebody please explain to me why the tabernacle (if we're allowed to call it that any more) is about as easy to find in most Catholic churches now as the bathroom? Are we supposed to genuflect and teach our kids to genuflect when we walk into church anymore? In which direction? To what? Okay, so the old way was wrong? Okay not wrong, but what? Inappropriate? Why? What, exactly, are those very well-meaning people who have removed the tabernacle protecting us liturgical undergraduates from? We used to make a reflexive sign of the cross when we went past a church, used to genuflect without thinking about it when we went in, used to "make visits," used to show up for Benediction of what we unblushingly called the Blessed Sacrament, used to use dimly understood Latin when we prayed publicly as a sort of verbal taking off of our shoes because we were on holy ground. I *know* that the people who want to bring back liturgical Latin are gristle-brained, thin-lipped, anal retentive sociopaths who also want to ban menstruating women from the sanctuary, but what gesture, verbal or otherwise, now reminds us that the Mass is not an ordinary public event? My son just received his First Communion at a liturgy beside which Jerry Falwell's Old Time Gospel Hour would have looked and felt like Easter on Mount Athos.

Despite the fact that you could find Bavarian guards at Auschwitz, colonels in the Salvadoran army, and even North American realtors who were taught to genuflect, make visits, and approach the Eucharist with awe, the vanishing of the communal sensibility which underwrote those habits is certainly a loss. When we come before that fragment of bread, is it such an anemic matter as T.S. Eliot's kneeling "where prayer has been valid"? We act as if that's all it is. Those of us who oppose the killing of the unborn, the execution of criminals, the annihilation of cities, and the use of food as a weapon say that we oppose these things because we believe that human life is sacred, but the word "sacred" seems a quaint and old-fashioned usage. What can the word "sacred" mean to people who can't revere? No wonder so many of our children, our feeble-minded, and our poor are at such risk . They're merely sacred.

The Body and Blood of Jesus can indeed cleave to our inmost beings and preserve us for life everlasting, but not unless we know and, yes, even fear, the bread and wine which are his Body and Blood. The faith which comes to us from the apostles—or from the apostles to our Mom and then to us—can transform us into new and true beings who can see and withstand and love the face of God, but only if we become dismayed at the sorts of pathetic and self-pitying beings we are now.

But we like ourselves just fine, thanks. The *zeitgeist* is always telling us to take it easy on ourselves, to remember that we're not such bad people after all, that there really isn't very much we can do about ourselves and the knowledge to which Wallace Stevens points in *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* "that we live in a place That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves And hard it is in spite of blazoned days." It tells us the very opposite thing, in fact: That we are *supposed* to be jogging around and around the same tediously pleasant Indiana subdivision wired



into easy listening and worrying about the dog's eye infection. That it's healthy to imagine ourselves doing great deeds as long as we don't get carried away. That this little cluster of appetites and ambitions and fears is all we are and all we ever were and all we can ever hope to be. That there is not, as we sometimes suspect, newness of life, perfect joy, a good reason to lay down our lives. That the world's fullness is made and not found by us. Pretty much the same old discouraging news you can always expect a *zeitgeist* to bring, horribly familiar to those fishermen, idlers, and ne'er-do-wells who one day in Palestine met someone who shared their anguish over a relentless and respectable death in a bleak prosperity. Someone who was not only way out, but The Way Out. Someone who called himself the Way.

We can continue to raise up and sustain a community which encounters him, but only when we become much more uneasy with our surroundings and habits and boorish longings. After all, nothing very hopeful happened to Saint Francis until he could no longer stand the customary ways of making do in Assisi, but look what happened then.

Today's young adult Catholics are the great-grandsons and great-granddaughters of men and women who died in the nation's wars and slums, who bravely and patiently wore down the bigotry of the fearful and powerful, and who won for us by their sheer persistence the rights of the citizenship we enjoy. These same men and women taught our grandmothers and grandfathers as they taught their children and their children taught us the customary ways of making do in America.

But marriage, friendship, the encounter with a stranger, and the notion of responsibility for others are pretty provisional and stinting as enshrined in American custom and law, and if we young adult Catholics can't astonish—perhaps even scare a little—our fellow Americans with the Kingdom's understanding of such relationships, we might as well buy the kids more access to cable TV, procure them safer dope and better condoms, and go jogging around the suburbs until the coronary comes. But a little self-reproach, a little repentance, a little fasting, a little silence, and a little prayer might begin to do marvelous things to the crumbling old cultural forms and the forms that have yet to rise.

Basically, we need a radical despair of contemporary culture.

Otherwise, as a wily old retreat master used to say, we might miss being crucified, and that would be a pity. □

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FAITH WATCHING: MORE OF US HAVE LESS IN COMMON

Kathleen McG. Hidy

Two springs ago I set out with a taperecorder, a few questions, and a list of names to interview a number of young Catholics ranging in age from the early twenties to early thirties. My intention collided in not a few instances with my mechanical ineptitude at handling sophisticated technologies like tape recorders and, even worse, my lack of experience in the fine art of eliciting personal and revealing information from virtual strangers. Oprah Winfrey I'm not. Admittedly, I created my list of interviewees myself; most were acquaintances, a few were friends, and one was a sibling who begged for anonymity lest guilt come by association.

My list was drawn from a cast of hundreds, and along the way I have met and shared conversation with countless Catholics of all ages. Twenty-six years of mandatory membership in an Irish Catholic family gives one nothing if not a wide circle of Catholic acquaintances, many of whom are relatives, and an even wider circle of contact with various religious devotions and spiritualities, all in some way "Catholic." My immediate family boasts one charismatic, a contemplative (my mother), two ex-seminarians, a supernumerary in Opus Dei, a Pascalian (my husband), a Maryknoll groupie, and one frustrated layman plagued with an affliction called "clerical namedropping," a form of clergy envy, who seeks therapy through reading passages of Greeley aloud at the dinner table. (Honest.)

My interest in "faith-watching" among young Catholics took hold seven years ago while I was a junior at the University of Notre Dame. There I was conscious of a rift among Catholics of my generation—a rift I later learned cut far deeper and wider a swath than my campus experiences indicated. At Notre Dame, I stumbled upon a kind of "San Andreas fault" in the Catholic community. There, theologies and spiritualities collided, like shifting tectonic plates, leaving the Catholic community and its faithful shaken and sometimes damaged. In my own family, with its motley collection of dissenters and daily communicants, tolerance always yielded to respect, respect succumbed to understanding, and understanding eventually became transmuted into a deeper appreciation for the many-angled love of God that desires us and pierces us each in a unique and wonderful way. While our dinner conversations and disagreements were spirited, they were never unloving. The same could not be said about my peers at Notre Dame or, as I have found, the wider family of church.

The remarkable beauty of the Catholic faith lies in its resolution of profound paradoxes. We are a universal church comprised of diverse peoples. We praise an immanent and transcendent God who is one God with three persons. The astonishing fact of life young and not-so-young Catholics live with is that the dialogue of faith—which allows an old church to be born anew in each generation and in every age—has to a great extent ceased and been replaced by a growing factionalism within the church, distinguished by a rise in spiritual subcultures particularly among the young.

Chris: "I don't think I'm a salad-bar Catholic. What I am is a vegetarian Catholic; there are some things I just won't touch." My law school classmate sits across from me, visibly at ease with our conversation. Chris is a boyish thirty-one. His lithe body makes him look more like the liturgical dancer he was; no signs of a lawyer's paunch yet. "I don't think you have to believe that the hierarchy always speaks with authority, or that there are seven sacraments, or that your relationship with God is defined by genital sexuality, or that only men can be priests." Chris and many other young Catholics I have talked with cling like branches to their vine: the centrality of the gospel "message" and the power of the church as "community." The rest of the faith, young Catholics like Chris contend, is more or less packaging and they prefer their spiritual gifts unwrapped, thank you.

Marie: "I find the Catholic church intractable on issues only tangentially related to fundamental beliefs." Marie, twenty-five, sits on the new spring grass and squints from the April sun. She is bitter, she says, because the Catholic church has abandoned the lay experience for a doctrinaire high ground that leaves her, a practicing lesbian, without much welcome. Like Chris, Marie tells me that being Catholic has little to do with following church teachings. A commitment to the call of the gospel is the sole credential for membership in the Catholic community.

Chris and Marie each belonged to lay faith communities—one to a traveling liturgical dance troupe and the other to a Catholic student house. All the young Catholics I interviewed, some members of lay groups, some not, told me that these groups fill a void that run-of-the-mill parishes do not. Young Catholics hunger for the companionship, support, and formation that lay groups offer. Those I interviewed who belonged to a faith community like the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, a Newman Center, or Opus Dei attributed their continuing faith development to their involvement in these groups. Unfortunately, cross-fertilization between groups rarely occurs. Factions or cliques sprout up easily.

KATHLEEN McGARVEY HIDY, *a graduate of Columbia University Law School, is an attorney presently clerking for a federal judge in Cincinnati, Ohio.*

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John: "If you don't accept that what the magisterium of the church says is true, if you don't accept that they have the authority to do that, then in essence you are not really holding the Catholic faith." John, a twenty-three-year-old Opus Dei member, has met me for an early, and as it turns out eye-opening, breakfast. John is a numerary of Opus Dei; he lives in an Opus Dei-owned house with other laymen who, among other disciplines, have taken a vow of celibacy. Opus Dei is merely the most prominent of the many conservative Catholic lay societies that seem to appeal more and more to my generation. The credo of many of these young Catholics is that mother church knows best. Even at Notre Dame, I heard students defend the wisdom of avoiding modern atheistic philosophers lest their fare prove too tempting. I've personally never thought a weak stomach was worth worrying about, nor a weak faith worth protecting. Nonetheless, the Catholic young betray their attraction to the good ol' days when Catholics were Catholics, men were men, etc.

All the young Catholics I interviewed agree on one thing: more and more Catholics have less and less in common. Diversity within a greater unity, a prized insight for a Trinitarian faith, may no longer be an accurate portrayal of the church which encompasses conflicting and, in some instances irreconcilable visions of Catholicism as seen by its rank and file. Young Catholics, confused and divided over what their Catholic inheritance consists of, crave leadership and direction. Regrettably, the American bishops, on the whole, have relinquished their roles as credible, effective teachers for many young Catholics. Archbishop Weakland and a notable few stand out in bold relief for their efforts to create an open and animated dialogue among the faithful in their dioceses. These attempts by the Catholic hierarchy are rare enough to make headlines. Until the American hierarchy is capable of engaging in a mature, candid, and sustained conversation with the laity (and with the Vatican), their commissions and pastoral letters will be dismissed by young and not-so-young alike as ivory-tower conferences and treatises.

The laity, too, share blame. Bogged down by apathy and often illiterate in much of their faith, lay men and women cannot articulate for themselves—let alone for the "next" generation—what their Catholic heritage means at the close of the twentieth century.

Few authentic and credible voices lead us to that place where orthodoxy and Spirit embrace. Understandably, young Catholics increasingly find havens in lay communities that offer clear, decisive, if one-sided interpretations of Catholicity. This century's legacy to the next may well be a peculiarly uncatholic church...in the meantime, silence, more misunderstanding, and ultimately the painful breaking of the bonds that keep the family of Christ one in Spirit and one in love.

Last Thanksgiving, my thirty-eight-year-old aunt, a charismatic, chided our bishop (not supping with us) for allowing the Episcopalians to use our cathedral for the ordination of a new bishop. The good Episcopalians' practice of ordaining women made them wholly unsuitable candidates for the use of a Catholic cathedral, reasoned the charismatic. Just the bait the Maryknoll groupie needed. She bit. The Opus Dei supernumerary choked. And my mother, the contemplative, asked me to pass the rolls. □

WORKING IT OUT: YOUNG CATHOLICS' BALANCING ACT

John Fontana

She was thirty-three. She had been vice-president of human resources for a publishing company that had been acquired by a larger corporation and had moved from Chicago. She did not want to leave the city and was looking for a new job. She had dedicated five years of her life to this company and was still reeling from the shock of losing her job. As she spoke, it became apparent that for the last five years this woman had spent virtually all her time working. When she left my office at the Crossroads Center several hours later, she knew that it was not just a new job she needed: "I realize that my life is out of balance. I need a social life and a religious life."

This question of balance strikes at the heart of what young adults must struggle with. Work is the one overwhelming demand in their lives. They know that they should pay attention to civic and community issues, spend time with family and friends, and leave time for leisure. But when push comes to shove it's their work lives that take first place. Unlike their grandparents and parents, many young adult Catholics do not "settle down" quickly, do not in rapid sequence finish school, find a job, get married, and join a parish. Today, both men and women finish school and go to work. Marriage, family—and perhaps a parish—eventually come for many of them, but often only after several years of building careers and working their way up corporate ladders. There are few resources—Catholic movements or organizations, downtown parishes, work-centered support groups—given to paying attention to the often contradictory realms in which these young adults live. They must often confront basic ethical and religious questions on their own.

The aim of this article is less to prescribe what "the church" should be doing about this situation than to describe in some

JOHN FONTANA *is director of the Crossroads Center for Faith and Work at Old St. Patrick's Church in Chicago.*

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detail how young adult Catholics see their work, to bring out its centrality and explain why an informed and vigorous response is necessary. The life choices made by lay people—in their jobs, families, neighborhoods, and in politics—are ultimately value choices, shaping communities and the nation. But the choices are not simple, and today they are made more complicated than ever by the rapidly changing context within which careers (or vocations) are pursued.

When young people enter the world of work, they begin to crack open some of the most important questions of their lives. Who am I? Why work? Am I doing the right work? What kind of a life do I want? In short, they face decisions that will shape a lifetime of work and relationships. Because young adults spend so much time at work, the workplace inevitably becomes the springboard for examining important issues about identity and values. I am reminded of the young man, thirty-one years old, who came to my office. He was an audit manager for a large corporation in suburban Chicago. Married, with two small children, he was offered a promotion if he transferred to a company in South Africa. He had three days to make the decision. Being a native Chicagoan with a large extended family, he knew it would be difficult to leave. But a successful career in his field clearly called for some work overseas. He questioned how happy he could be in a country with South Africa's social and political divisions. Yet, he knew his future earnings and his advancement in the company would be harmed if he did not accept the move. How was he to choose between the competing values in his life?

Not an easy decision. Bringing religious and ethical questions into the workplace requires a solid understanding of modern economic life. First, it is important to understand that young working adults have very little control over external changes such as mergers and transfers. Change, as the cliché goes, is the one unchanging factor. Second, impersonalization and bureaucratic administration often make ethical calculation a very solitary and ultimately individualistic process.

In the last fifty years dramatic changes have taken place in the way corporations do business, in the people who comprise the work force, in the types of work done, and in attitudes about work. Since the 1960s, the U.S. economy has evolved from manufacturing to service. Currently 70 percent of Americans work in the service sector and the number is growing; these include jobs in transportation, government, retail and wholesale commerce, professional services, insurance, health, real estate, finance, telecommunications, and technology. The shift in jobs has brought a shift in organizational behavior. Mergers and acquisitions, leveraged buy-outs, and restructuring or "downsizing" coupled with an increase in world competition and the movement of work and plants overseas into cheaper labor markets has caused tremendous upheaval. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs.

The "organization man" of the '50s has gone the way of the dinosaur. Baby boomers see their elders forced into early retirement as firms reorganize, or decide their skills are obsolete. Young workers clearly understand that the employment contract is changing: the "corporate parent" isn't there to take care of them for life. They realize that it is wiser to depend on their own skills and knowledge rather than rely on a company or corporation for job security.

In addition, the increasing demand for high-tech workers has created the need for a better educated work force. In 1940, the average American went to school 8.7 years. By 1980, that had increased to 12.7 years. People are staying in school longer and, once embarked on a career, many will return to school at some point to continue their education or retrain for another job. This higher level of education creates in them expectations of greater rewards from their work, including more time off. It is sometimes harder to motivate young adults and they show greater concern than their parents with leisure. "Before 1940, few nonmanagerial workers received paid vacations. By 1970, virtually all plant workers and office workers in metropolitan areas worked in establishments that provided paid vacations, with the average full-time worker receiving two full weeks. Similarly, the number of paid holidays more than quadrupled between 1940 and 1970, growing from an average of two to nine days annually" (Sar Levitan and Clifford Johnson, *The Survival of Work*). As education improves and income increases, the relationship between work and leisure becomes ever more entangled. Young adults often define themselves as much by their leisure activities as their work.

Unquestionably, however, the most startling change in the workplace has been the increased presence and influence of women. In the 1950s, the typical family of breadwinner-father and homemaker-mother represented over 50 percent of the population. Now only 13 percent of families fit that description. Since 1970 the percentage of women in the work force with children under the age of three has doubled. Of the 26 million married women currently in the work force, 20 percent earn more than their husbands. Women now are pushing toward 50 percent of most law school classes, and the same percentages are showing up in business schools. Engineering programs tend to be about five to ten years behind, but women are making headway even in that traditionally male-dominated profession. Demographers estimate that by 1995, women will be a majority in the workplace.

These new options for women make life choices for couples more complex than those faced by earlier generations; and, as all of these data suggest, this development also has serious implications for our culture. In *Why Work*, Michael Maccoby takes what most of us know: "we are in a period of values transformation, pushed along by changes in work and family structure," and applies it to the workplace: "the new social character no longer models itself on the paternal image at work and the maternal image at home. The two wage-earner family requires shared authority and tradeoffs between work and family structure."

Young people are wrestling with these changes, and they need guidance and support. But of what sort? Take the business consultant, a young woman, pregnant with her first child, who came to talk about organization ethics. She spoke about the complex, competitive, politicized environment of her Fortune 500 clients; about the difficult tasks of being a young consultant in a shifting, often irrational milieu. She wanted to help create more open,

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ethical, and less covert, manipulative working situations. Our conversation eventually touched on how she was going to deal with the coming baby, a husband in graduate school, and her consulting work. She left the office saying, "After the baby, it's going to get interesting! On with the balancing act!" Even this high-powered analyzer of organizational behavior was not clear about her future course.

In these circumstances, the spiritual and psychological challenge facing young adults is enormous. They are in search of an identity that their culture, their families, their roles, their work no longer fully provide, an identity that enables them to give some shape to their own lives. This search begins when they leave home and move into the world of work. Do they find a job? Build a career? Choose a vocation? They often experiment with a variety of jobs and careers. It is a time of great uncertainty and there is both danger and opportunity in the quest for identity: the danger of getting lost or trapped and the opportunity of finding what psychologists call the true self. By their thirties, it is not uncommon to see young adults become clinically depressed if they have not become their own person.

In *Why Work*, Maccoby reports on his study of job motivation among thirty-five hundred employees in a wide variety of industries. He describes eight different "value" drives among these workers: survival, relatedness, pleasure, information, mastery, play, dignity, and meaning. The stories told by the young adults in his study demonstrate that work choices among these so-called values are critical in developing moral and spiritual character. Most important, however, the workplace is seen to be the arena in which we can become "more integrated and purposeful."

The consequences of these value choices, of course, are played out over a lifetime, along with family life and growing maturity. In their twenties, young adults are making their first set of critical adult decisions. In their thirties they often find themselves re-evaluating their initial decisions, particularly decisions about work. During such transitional periods, people naturally are searching for new possibilities in the world and within themselves. Much of the change occurs internally, yet these internal changes can be eclipsed by the demands of work and of the external world. Consequently, young adults may feel the pull of moral and spiritual needs without being able to identify them consciously, talk about them explicitly, or feel they can do much to meet those needs.

One strategy suggested by psychologists is to develop mentors, a venerable tradition. Odysseus entrusted his son Telemachus to his counselor, Mentor, while Odysseus was away at war. The mentor is the person who helps guide our path in the world of work. Great mentors have already learned to navigate that world; they are attuned to the forces of the external world and the inner dynamics of growth. Perhaps in carrying out its old responsibilities in new ways, the church could help develop such mentors.

As the changes in modern life accelerate there is a growing need for young adults to find people and places that can provide opportunities for them to integrate their needs and ambitions. The Catholic church, through its parishes and organizations, or through helping to form small groups in the workplace, could be such a place. Too little attention is paid to the topic of work in church literature and church programming. Yet the world of work is precisely where lay people spend most of their time! In crude economic jargon, this is a lost business opportunity. By ignoring the workplace Catholic organizations and parishes are missing ministerial opportunities. We are a sacramental church. Isn't it time we start spending more time understanding the sacramentality of work? John McDermott said it best in his address to the National Convocation of the Laity in 1986: "Our work is God's work in the world." □

During my years as college professor (since 1976), lecturer, writer, and mother I have learned that the task of trying to make sense of Catholic teaching on sexuality has to be geared to different audiences with different life experiences. Each generation has its own questions. Those of us who were teen-agers before Vatican II still carry on a struggle of "liberation" from a negative and restrictive picture of sexual dangers. But most younger adults and virtually all teens today face a different battle: to carve out some sense of sexual direction in a peer and media culture which presents sex as a sophisticated recreational activity for which the only moral criterion is mutual consent. I have finally learned that my invitations to appreciate the goodness and pervasiveness of sexuality sound not only redundant but even naive to audiences hungry for a solid answer to shallow or cynical versions of precisely that same message.

Currents of ethical and theological thought within the church manifest similar differences in perspective. Controversies over sexual morality are shaped by at least four constituencies, having

LISA SOWLE CAHILL *is professor of theology at Boston College and author of* Between the Sexes: Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality *(Paulist).*

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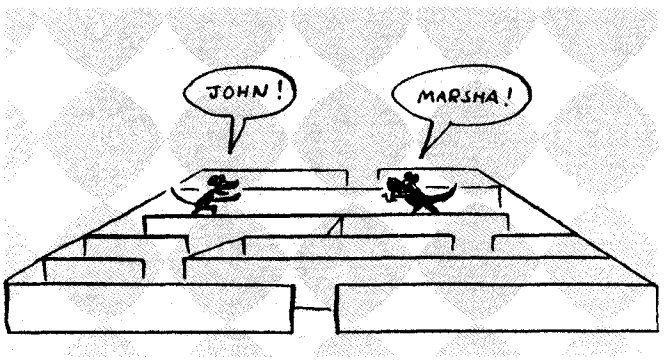
different and perhaps incompatible agendas. Though this is to simplify, we may think of them as the traditionalists, the revisionists, the skeptics, and the alienated. These groups represent different responses to the exciting but tumultuous changes which beset the church as well as the culture in the 1960s. The traditionalists put conformity to magisterial teaching high on the list of Catholic identity markers. They stand behind the idea that Vatican positions on matters like premarital sex, birth control, abortion, homosexuality, and divorce can brook no "dissent." Holding a united front on these questions is perceived as essential to the continued strength of church authority. Traditionalists try to connect past teaching with the modern world by arguing that those who *experience* sexual intimacy and honestly examine it will agree that the relationship is a form of "mutual self-gift" (in a phrase of John Paul II), which intrinsically requires heterosexuality, commitment, permanency, exclusivity, and procreation.

A second group, the "revisionists," mostly grew to maturity before Vatican II, and remember vividly the revitalization the council brought. These Catholics, some parents of adolescents and young adults, see the church as their religio-cultural home, even as "mother" and "teacher," but they disagree that sexual and marital experience necessarily confirm all current church teaching. At least since the sixties, they have had serious doubts about whether the positions on contraception and divorce can really hold water. They continue to struggle within the church to find room and a voice for moderate reformulations of—and possibly a few exceptions to—the Catholic view that sex belongs in indissoluble marriage and leads to parenthood.

A third group might be called the "skeptics." Many, but not all, of them are younger adults who are less willing to take church credibility for granted. They tend to look on in disbelief as the church of their parents promotes teachings on sex which appear oblivious to the realities of human relationships, at least in the U.S. They observe the same phenomena as do the "revisionists"—the widespread acceptance of contraception, "living together," homosexuality, abortion; the threats of AIDS and marital breakdown. But although the skeptics still consider themselves "Catholic," they differ from the "revisionists." They openly assert that church teaching on sex as formulated primarily by celibate male clergy should be declared irrelevant to modern needs. Ready to relegate the traditionalists to the lunatic fringe, they smile at the earnest and rather dogged reinterpretive efforts of the revisionists, wondering when they will realize the impossibility of making headway toward change within present structures.



The fourth group, the "alienated," no longer feel any special tie to the Catholic church or any necessity to justify, struggle with, or refute its teachings. Roman Catholicism is not a resource to which they turn (at least not consciously) for guidance on sex or any other issue. Church sexual teachings, when considered at all, are written off as obsolete, oppressive, and outrageous. Even though "alienated" Catholics are in a sense no longer a "constituency" for church teaching, it is significant that that teaching evokes so negative a response in a group whose size is far from negligible.

This author would be best identified as a member of constituency two attempting to convince constituency three that there is something worthwhile about sex still to be mined in Catholic teaching—though I would have to concur in the quite legitimate impression that its practical value is not always easy to discover.

The Catholic tradition on sexuality has always defined its moral parameters in terms of *marriage*. More than a union of two individuals, marriage is set in the context of *family*, and especially of *procreation*. Augustine and Aquinas saw procreation in marriage as the only reason fully justifying sexual intercourse, and saw both procreation and marriage as especially important insofar as they contribute to the species, the society, and the kinship network or extended family. Although companionship and friendship of spouses were ideals, premodern authors, like the society around them, were unable to recognize the later ideal of "interpersonal union" both because they lacked our sense of the importance of individuals, and because women were considered inferior and subordinate to their male partners. Procreation as the primary purpose of sex was maintained as late as 1930 (in Pius XI's encyclical *Casti connubii*). A breakthrough occurred in Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* (1965) and in the encyclical *Humanae vitae* (1968), when love and procreation were ranked equally as the purposes of marriage. This shift raising love to a level with procreation represented the influence of philosophical "personalism," and the emergent awareness of women's equality. Yet official church teaching continues to tie respect for these values very much to the physical act of sexual intercourse, not to the overall or long-range relationship of the couple. Today it teaches that both purposes must be present in "each and every act." That is, every act must be part of a permanently committed, heterosexual, love relationship; and every single act must be procreative, *in the sense that* the outcome of procreation must not be artificially prevented.

Contemporary experience and thought raise challenges to this specific presentation of the teaching that should not be underestimated. "Sexuality" is now recognized as a basic dimension of the personality, and covers far more than genital acts designed for reproduction. The affective and interpersonal dimensions of sex, along with the occasions it offers for intimacy and reciprocal pleasure, have become far more important. The wrongness and harm of defining all or most nonprocreative sexual pleasure as "sinful" is evident. The feminist movement has sharply cri-

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tiqued the distorted forms with which patriarchy has shaped both marriage and family, and has begun to reshape sexuality with a new appreciation of women's experiences of sex, spousehood, and motherhood. Delayed marriage for many young adults who pursue educational and vocational goals also means a longer period of sexual maturity and potential relationships before marriage. The responsibility of the marriageable to choose their own partners rather than relying on parental negotiations or social and religious similarity, along with the high incidence of divorce, has led to premarital sex and "trial marriages," which many see as prudent exploratory arrangements. And there are many single adult Catholics who may not have the opportunity or desire for marriage, but who yearn for intimacy and sexual expression, for which they may find occasions outside marriage. Many lesbian and gay persons see their sexuality as a gift to be valued both for personal identity and in relationships. They call for church support of their efforts to live as faithful Christians and to gain protection of their civil rights. All of these considerations pose challenges to church teaching which, it must be admitted, the church has not adequately met. They also raise questions which I cannot pursue here, though I have advocated modifications (a group-two goal!) of church teaching on many of these points. Indeed, it sometimes seems that both "conservatives" and "liberals" (terms that in practice refer to the traditionalists and the revisionists, since neither the skeptics nor the alienated see the relevant intra-ecclesial debates as worth the investment) become unduly distracted from more fundamental issues by battles over the morality of sexual acts: premarital, contraceptive, homosexual, etc. If we could transcend the limits of such discussions, we might recover the essential message about sexuality which Roman Catholicism transmits.

What is that message? What is a credible, convincing, and helpful expression of Christian sexual values today? I think that message pertains to three dimensions of sexuality: 1) sex as a physical drive for pleasure; 2) sex as intimacy or love; 3) sex as procreative. It is the value of the third that is the most necessary and the most difficult to communicate to today's young adults.

Sex as a physical drive. In the past, there has been in Christianity (in Augustine, for instance) a deep suspicion of sexual drives or sexual desire. This suspicion was no doubt based on sex's undeniable tendency to break social and moral restraints, and to seek fulfillment in self-centered, manipulative, and even violent ways. Today this attitude might be revised into the recognition that the sexual drive has real limits as a guide to sexual relationships. The dominant "cultural message"—that sex is natural, enjoyable, good, and even recreational—has an obvious legitimacy in itself, and exponents of a Catholic Christian approach to sexuality should not appear grudging in their acceptance of the "joy of sex." But the message is incomplete and inadequate. Using sexual acts and relationships as an outlet for our physical drives or as a means of access to physical enjoyment is not *bad*, but it is *limited*. Media images aside, I doubt that many people really disagree with this point, however much some may be tempted to rationalize indiscriminate sexual behavior. Physical desire and enjoyment taken alone as motives for sex make sex unfulfilling, lonely, and perhaps ultimately boring. Although women seem to understand better than men that sexual intimacy naturally entails psychological intimacy, I doubt this difference is innate. Rather it is a matter of women being socialized or socially encouraged to take intimacy more seriously. Intimacy adds to the fulfillment of both men's and women's sexuality. This leads to sex's second dimension.

Sex as love. Seeing sex as an expression of love seems to verge on the romantic, yet it is not all that foreign to most of our experiences and personal goals. Our culture is prone to cynicism about the trustworthiness of human relationships. But sexual intimacy can express and augment psychological intimacy, affection, reciprocal understanding and encouragement, partnership, companionship, compassion, and even commitment. One Catholic Christian value of sexuality is permanence: the love relationship established sexually between a woman and a man should be long-term and not transient. Sex with little or no commitment shortchanges sex's potential for intimacy. Unlike other animal species, humans have a deep capacity for friendship and interpersonal reciprocity, which, when expressed sexually, constitutes the most intense of human relationships. The appropriate moral context for complete sexual union is a commensurate level of interpersonal commitment. Unequal commitment between partners leads to manipulation, disappointment, and pain. Sex without commitment is unfaithful to the human potential of sexuality.

The psychological and personal aspects of sexual union are complemented by the relation of the sexual couple to the family and society. Our sexuality is not simply an individualistic capacity but binds us with others in families, that is, in some of the most rewarding and most demanding of human relationships. A man and woman bring to their union links with and commitments to other persons, including their respective families and friends and, eventually, the children their union may produce. Although not all sexual couples give birth to children, the procreative potential of sex is always a part of that relationship. The prospect of pregnancy and parenthood is not always intentional and dominant in the relationship, but it is nonetheless a latent and morally important possibility. Obviously a faithful commitment between parents is the best context for the nurture of children.

Like many group-two Catholics, I have often considered the common practice of "living together" with some misgivings along with the feeling that there might be in it something to be learned about the nature of sexual commitment. Some of my intuitions came together upon hearing a Ugandan bishop observe that, in his culture, marriage was a *progressive* reality, which did not come into being in an instant during a single ceremony, but which developed through a process of negotiation, visiting, and gift-giving among bride, groom, and their families. Although at some time during the process the couple might have sexual relations and even bear children, there was actually no one "point" before which a marriage did not exist and after which it did. Perhaps many couples in our culture are making a similar statement about their growing trust in and love for each other. However, the shortcoming of "progressive marriage" as we see

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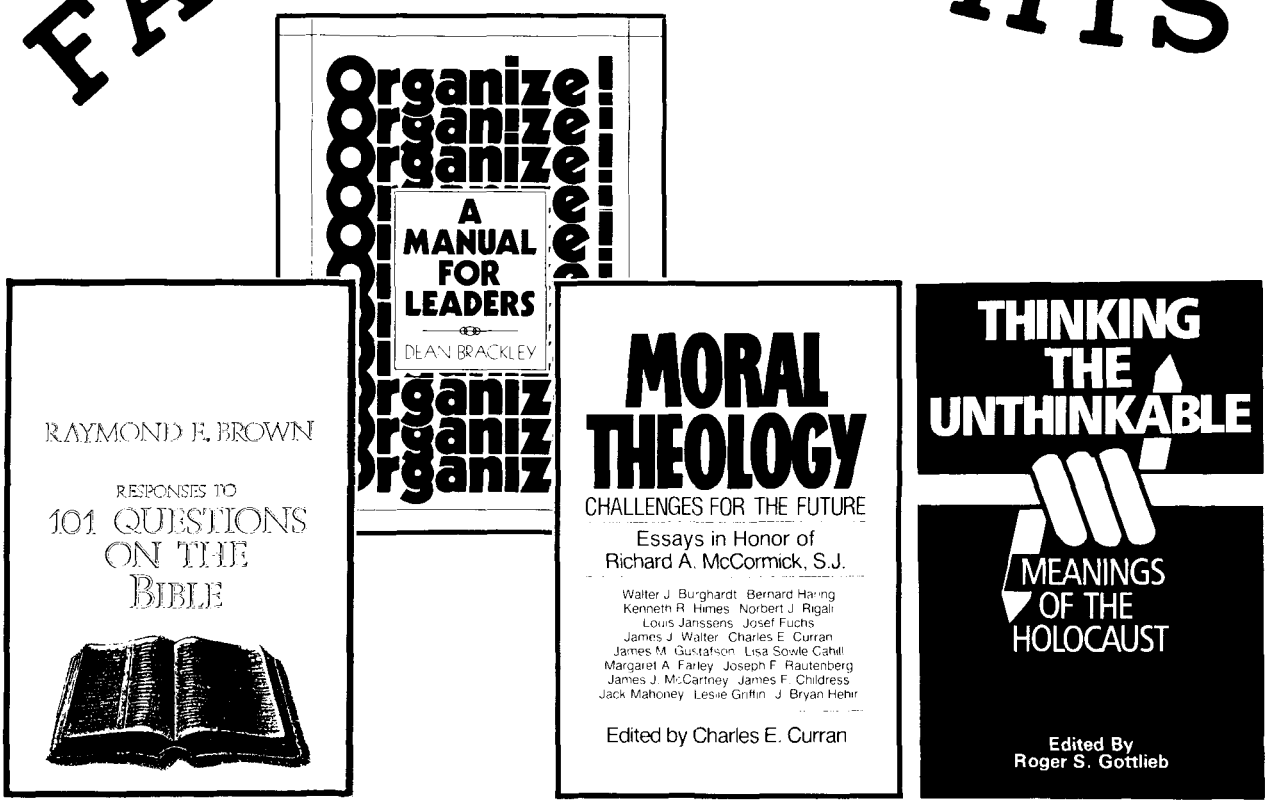

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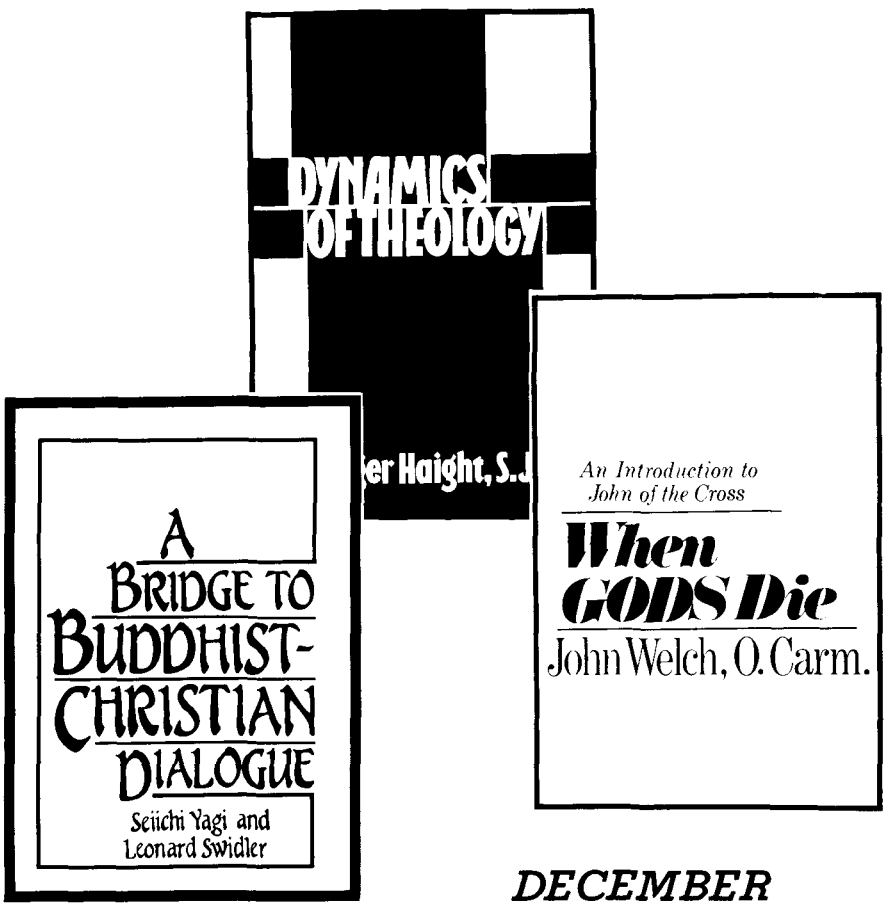
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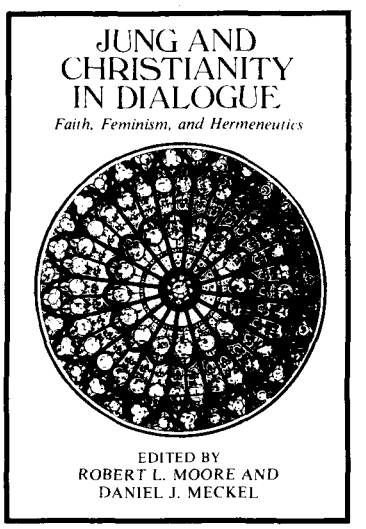

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it in the U.S. is the isolation of the unmarried sexual couple from the social support and accountability that accompanies formal marriage. In Uganda, the whole family has an investment in the growing relationship and expects the couple to make it work, persuading, admonishing, and supporting them as need be. This system also has clear understandings about how children will be cared for within the families if the couple subsequently parts. In other words, the African form of gradual marriage carries with it at every stage an increasing level of personal, familial, and social weight and responsibility. One thinks also of ancient Israelite betrothal and marriage, reflected in Matthew's and Luke's stories of the premarital pregnancy of Mary. The sexual relations permitted before marriage occurred in a context of religiously and socially specified conditions. Though the provisional sexual relationships common in our culture may represent a valid insight about the development of commitment, they still lack the social forms which would make them accountable to the genuine personal and communal significances of sex. One of these is parenthood, which leads us to the next point.

Sex as procreation. In modern Western cultures, the value of procreative sex may be harder to "sell" than pleasurable sex and loving sex. We are in an era in which procreation has been reduced to an incidental meaning of sex, usually to be avoided, and certainly to be accepted only if freely chosen. The deep associations and mutual reinforcements of sex, love, and parenthood are missing—partly because the church's teaching authority itself has narrowed their reciprocity to an experientially unintelligible focus on reproductive genital acts taken as separate events. But it is the unity of sex, love, and parenthood in this broader sense that is probably the major message Roman Catholicism has to offer today's young adults, who more easily see that sex expresses love than that sexual love leads to permanent commitment, parenthood, and family.

A better expression of this link, one we should aim to attain, lies in contemporary thought's repudiation of dualism, and its insistence that the body and the spirit or psyche form an integrated reality, not two uneasily aligned "components." We no longer tolerate a sexual ethics that sees the body as "bad," and to be repressed, while only our spiritual side is "holy." But a nondualistic view of sex requires that we premise a sexual morality on the goodness of sexual acts and sexual pleasure. It also requires that we look at these acts and their reproductive potential as an integrated whole or process. This is not to say that it is always wrong to interfere with conception as an outcome; but that moral analysis starts with a presumption in favor of the conduciveness of sex to shared parenthood. In other words, physical satisfaction or pleasure, interpersonal intimacy, and parenthood are not three separate "variables," or *possible* meanings of sex which we are morally free to combine or omit in different ways. Sex and love as fully *embodied* realities have an intrinsic moral connection to procreativity and to the shared creation and nurturing of new lives and new loves.

A more flexible and experientially adequate way to express this unity is not in terms of acts, but of *relationships*. Certain basic human relationships come together through our sexuality and link us not only to our partners but to the wider community, through the social relationships of marriage and family. These basic relationships are the woman-man and the parent-child relationships. Spousehood and parenthood are linked in the long-term commitment of the couple, sexually expressed. Both are not only intersubjective, but also embodied relationships. *Spousehood* is embodied through the shared material conditions of economic and domestic life, and through sexuality, which can give rise to a shared physical relation to the child. *Parenthood* is embodied through the shared material conditions of family life, again through the genetic link, and through the fact that the physical relation of spousehood is that which gives rise to parenthood.

To recapitulate, the Catholic tradition yields a set of moral attitudes toward sexuality, even before the point of dealing with concrete moral dilemmas or moral norms and prohibitions. The tradition can encourage respect and appreciation for sexuality as mutual physical pleasure, as intimacy, and as parenthood (or at least receptivity to it). These three relationships come together in the ongoing relationship of a couple. In all its dimensions, sex is both a psychospiritual experience and an embodied one, and both aspects contribute to its moral character.

Having said this, however, one also realizes that human circumstances sometimes arise in which not all three values (sex itself, commitment or love, and parenthood) can be realized simultaneously. In their sexual lives, as elsewhere, human beings are often confronted with moral conflicts, in which no choice is free of ambiguity. Of the three values, it is certainly love which is the *sine qua non*, the primary value in the triad. Since personhood is the most distinctive quality of the human being, it is the most personal aspect of sexuality which is *most* morally important. In unusual or difficult circumstances, the other two (sexual intercourse and procreation) can be subordinated to the love relationship of the couple as long as they are still given significant practical recognition. For example, in the use of contraception, procreation is temporarily set aside, but it still can be realized in the total relationship of the couple. In some infertility therapies, sex itself is set aside as the means to conception, but certainly the relationship of the couple which is both loving and procreative is otherwise given sexual expression. On the other hand, couples who are absolutely intolerant of the prospect of parenthood, perhaps resorting even to abortion as a means of birth control, do not give adequate moral recognition to the relation of sex, love, and procreation. Similarly, couples so desperate to conceive that they are willing to set aside the unity of their spousal-sexual-parental bond by using donor sperm or a surrogate mother to create a reproductive union between one spouse and a third party are also less than faithful to the values which sexuality represents. Although marriages as human realities sometimes fail, a tragedy that church teaching on "indissolubility" may not have met satisfactorily, the asset of the tradition is that it holds up an ideal of permanency. The meaning of "love" in the sexual triad goes far beyond romantic affections. It means a commitment to build a mutually satisfying sexual relationship, to mutual respect, to understanding and support. It entails per-

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sistence, repentance, and forgiveness. However justified divorce may sometimes be, the very high incidence of divorce seems to be due to cultural forgetfulness that the commitment to marital partnership requires both ongoing personal dedication and strong social supports.

Since at least the 1960s, interpersonal values have moved to center stage in the Catholic picture of sex, just as more attention has been paid to the experience of actual sexual relationships. At the same time, the inclusion of love and commitment as central along with parenthood has been sidetracked by acrimonious exchanges over contraception and other issues. Such debates have drained energies from the real task of reappropriating the essentials of Catholic teaching for the next generation. What our culture most needs to hear is an effective critique of individualist, materialist, and transient sexual relationships—not lists of specific transgressions which are "against church teaching." The Catholic "message" is that the interdependence of sex's pleasurable, intimate, and parental aspects can anchor our sexuality in some of the most enduring and rewarding human relationships. That message will be heard only if it is addressed honestly to the real sexual experiences of young adult Catholics, and only if the messengers can listen to and even learn from their audience's response.

During the last few years, we've asked several dozen middle-class parents to describe what it's like to be a parent today. This sampling isn't scientifically valid, of course, but it gives rise to a view that's so consistent that it deserves to be credited: As these young adults see it, the role of a middle-class parent is much harder today than it was for their own parents.

It's harder for economic reasons. These parents are finding it harder to buy homes. They're finding it harder to save for college. They're finding it harder to raise children on one income. This is one reason why many couples with children want a second income and so incur an added cost, the cost of child care.

At the same time, these young parents feel constantly reminded of the comparative economic advantage that's enjoyed by their childless contemporaries, such as singles without children and couples without children. They feel it's a greater economic risk to become a parent today. It can pull you down the economic ladder, possibly to get stuck there. As a Manufacturers Hanover Trust ad recently cautioned them: "If you want a bundle of joy, you'll need a bundle of money."

It's harder because they have less time. As a study by the University of Michigan finds, most Americans have more leisure time today, but the parents of young children, particularly working mothers, now have less time. The parents we interviewed say they constantly search to find more time for the children. They try to stretch the day at both ends by waking the kids earlier and sending them to bed later than pediatricians and teachers might like. They shave time off one routine in order to free more time for another. Skipping a shampoo leaves a few more minutes for a bedtime story. Grabbing a drive-through meal leaves time for soccer practice. Couples frequently give up time with each other to get more time with the kids. They might choose to work complementary shifts rather than two 9-to-5 jobs, or one parent will work weekends, leaving the other at home with the children.

A family's schedule becomes an intricate application of time-and-motion principles. Every move must be carefully designed. Every piece must be engineered to fall into place just in time to meet the rigid arrival and departure times of child-care centers, schools, and workplaces. (Judging by the family schedules we collected, working parents ought to be hired as scheduling consultants by the airlines.) Often, a family's schedule has virtually no slack. When a shoe is lost, or a cold car engine fails to turn over, or a baby fills his diaper just after you've zipped him into his snowsuit, or the traffic jams up, or the staff meeting runs late, then the entire schedule can collapse. This is one reason why these parents feel they're under more stress than their own parents were.

As these parents describe them, moreover, their schedules rarely mesh with the schedules of other families on their block or in their community. Arrival and departure times vary family by family. Three or four different toddlers on the block will scatter with their parents to three or four different child-care arrangements. Some mothers at home feel stranded, with no playmates for their children. Parents no longer shop on the same day, much less at the same time.

Single parents' schedules are driven in part by the terms of their custody arrangements. Their kids move back and forth, from mother to father, one neighborhood to the other, with one schedule for some weekends, and a different schedule for the others. These kids often spend their summers outside of the neighborhood where they go to school. Noncustodial parents, whose time with their children is usually limited to weekends or vaca-

BARBARA DAFOE WHITEHEAD *works for Public Policy Associates, a Chicago-based consulting firm, specializing in work and family issues.* RALPH WHITEHEAD, JR., *teaches journalism at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.*

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tions, have a hard time establishing ties with the other families in their communities. They often become the "treat" parent, driving their kids around on the weekend in search of entertainment, fast food, and diversion. The loss of continuity in the family routine is also hard on the custodial parent. As one single mother put it: "My house is either too full or too empty."

These parents look back fondly on the rhythm of family life in their own childhood. It was steady: Supper time at 5:30. Bedtime at 8. Chores on Saturday. Church on Sunday morning, followed by dinner at 2. And it was shared: You went in for your supper when the other kids on the block went in for theirs. Your mothers put the babies down for naps at about the same time in the afternoon and then had coffee together. Your fathers visited as they washed the car. It was easy for young families to connect with other young families.

Accordingly, it's harder now for these connections to occur. Parents and kids no longer dominate entire blocks. Fewer back porches have tricycles, fewer houses have swing sets. With many parents at work and kids in child care, the neighborhoods are emptier in the daytime. For better or for worse, fewer mothers spend the day at home and on the block and in the neighborhood. They're less likely to rub shoulders with other parents on the stoop and at the playground, the grocery store, the doctor's office, the school. With less contact with other parents, they have less chance to compare notes, trade advice, help each other, and establish a common identity and shared values. Parents used to sing in a chorus. Now they tend to be soloists. Parents aren't necessarily there to play in the block's softball game, if there is one, or lead a Brownie troop, if there is one, or teach a group of kids how to make paper dolls or model cars. As a result, parents say, their children are less likely to get added guidance from other responsible adults: neighbors, friends, other parents. On the block, consequently, parents find that they and their children are isolated.

These parents also find they have less grassroots political strength. In their own parents' day, when communities were densely knit with young families, parents had no trouble winning local support for schools, sports programs, parks and playgrounds, summer recreation programs, extracurricular school activities—all geared to the needs of young families. Today, however, parents can't make such compelling claims on the community's resources. New and legitimate interests are competing for local tax dollars: elder programs, fuel assistance, toxic waste cleanup, homeless shelters. As a result, the bundle of services for parents and children is getting scaled back.

This is one of the results of demographic change. There has been a relative decline in parent households—a household with one or more parent and one or more of their own children under eighteen. Half the nation's households were parent households in 1960, but only a third are now. Within the universe of parent households, there has also been a change, of course. Married couples made up roughly 90 percent of such households in 1960, but make up roughly 70 percent today. The percentage with single mothers has grown fourfold and the percentage with single fathers, though it's still small, has doubled. Within the universe of married couples, there has been a similar growth in diversity, as the look-alike couple of the 1950s and 1960s, with its bread-winning husband and homemaking wife, has been joined by the couple who works one-and-a-half jobs and the couple who works two jobs and even the couple who works three or four jobs.

Thus, working parents don't always identify with stay-at-home parents. Single parents live different lives from married parents. A dual-income couple who earn $175,000 a year and agonize over the *au pair* shortage face different problems from a dual-income couple who bring home $30,000 and scour the supermarket bulletin board for babysitters. In 1960, parents were a virtually uniform majority. Today, they're a diverse minority.

More than anything else, these parents feel that the culture doesn't value parents as much as it did a generation ago. Parents aren't recognized for the contributions they're making, they feel, and they certainly aren't rewarded. They're at a disadvantage at work, they say, since many of their bosses and fellow workers suspect parents of letting children divide their loyalty, sap their energy, and disrupt their concentration. Teachers and parents used to be partners, these parents say, but the relationship today isn't as friendly as it once was and, at times, it becomes adversarial. All told, these parents say, the culture today just won't give us enough credit.

This point carries a particular weight because the parents place these considerations on a balance sheet. On one side, they're saddled with liabilities that their parents didn't have: a tougher economy, added claims on the hours in the day, a different social fabric, a new divergence of local interests. On the other side, they lack a huge asset that their parents drew on heavily during the roughly twenty-five years after World War II: a parent-friendly culture.

During the postwar years, the culture celebrated parenthood. It was the definitive credential of adulthood. More than getting a job, more than tying the knot, having a child was what made you a grown-up. It was the ticket of admission to community life. Parents were the ones who got involved, filled the churches, attended town meetings, formed committees, undertook projects, and improved the community. Parenthood also established you as a full member of the emerging consumer society.

Moreover, the culture gave parenthood a distinctive and powerful meaning. This meaning had a spiritual dimension: It was then a commonplace sentiment to see children as a blessing from God. To raise them was to do God's work and fulfill God's will. The meaning also had a civic dimension: To raise the next generation of Americans was to contribute to the public good and serve the national interest.

A generation ago, the dominance of a virtual monoculture of parenthood was excessive. Within the adult world, it defined nonparents as nonpersons. Far from being envied for their freedom or independence or devotion to career, childless adults were the objects of pity and condescension and even discrimination. In the postwar culture, it was inconceivable that "bachelors" and "old maids" might actually have chosen to be single and

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childless. Such a condition was an affliction, something to make the best of, possibly by volunteering to spend time with the children of neighbors or relatives.

Since then, parenthood has lost its meaning. Today's culture is highly secular. It doesn't grant a spiritual dimension to parenthood. Thus, parenthood isn't valued as a significant calling. Its civic rationale has also lapsed. Parenthood is defined as a wholly private role, detached from any conception of the public good. Raising children is now viewed as a lifestyle choice, just one of a whole pastry tray of equally valuable, or equally worthless, lifestyle choices. Some people choose to raise flowers. Some people choose to raise tropical fish. Some people choose to raise children. *De gustibus.*

An African proverb says: "It takes a village to raise a child." That is, a child can't be raised well solely by two parents, let alone just one, but has to be raised by a family that's embedded in a larger community of loving and responsible grownups. The parents we spoke with fondly recall the village of their own childhood. As they've discovered, it has since fallen into disrepair and disuse. They wouldn't necessarily want to be raising their own kids in it today, if such a sociological miracle were possible, but they would like to belong to a modernized version of it. This would be a parent-friendly presence that would, more than anything else, affirm and support what they see as the deeply moral dimension of the parent's role, a dimension that has two parts.

One is the moral content of what parents do. As these parents define it, their prime responsibility is a moral responsibility, the responsibility to shape their children's values. "To teach them," as virtually all put it, "right from wrong." As they look to the larger culture, they find very few allies who will help them to fulfill the responsibility and several outright adversaries, particularly the materialistic values of consumption and career. They find few places where they can even sit down with other parents and discuss what's important in life for them and their children, and why. On this score, the church can act as an ally. It can help parents to find and make common cause with other parents, and can bring parents and children into regular contact with other loving and responsible grownups.

The other is the moral significance of what parents do. As these parents see it, their role doesn't stand on the same moral plane as raising zinnias or neon tetras. The task of guiding the life of a child, they think, is more important than taking care of a flower or a tropical fish, and they want credit for doing it. But they need support to do it well. And since they don't find this in the culture at large, with it value-neutral view of the parent's role, they will try to find it elsewhere. Because of its longstanding appreciation for the moral stature of the parent's role, the church, with its conception of parenthood grounded in religious belief and practice, can offer that sense of higher purpose and spiritual nourishment that is so needed. □

ROUNDTABLE

REV. JOHN CUSICK *directs young adult ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago.*

MARTHA DUDICH *coordinates young adult ministry in the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey.*

CHUCK PFEFFER *is director of the department of youth activities and has responsibilities for young adult ministry in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia*

MAREE HARTLEY *is coordinator of young adult ministry in the Archdiocese of New York.*

SISTER MARGARET O'BRIEN *is director of young adult ministry for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York.*

KATE DEVRIES *is the associate director of young adult ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago.*

What are the attitudes of young adult Catholics to the church?

Margaret: Young adult Catholics expect to be and want to be connected, but so often the church doesn't speak to them. If they don't feel a place of belonging, they find themselves in other churches where they do feel welcome.

John: Their families are Catholic and families have certain expectations, but in their twenties and thirties, the in-between years—in between confirmation and getting married—young adults often don't see what the church has to offer them.

Chuck: How many young adults would say they feel welcome at Sunday celebrations in their parishes? At times they find it to be rather sterile, formal, and cold.

Margaret: There is no compulsion to attend Mass and to receive the sacraments. There's no drivenness, like not going will be a sin, a mortal sin. That doesn't even enter their heads. On a Saturday or Sunday with other things going on, it just doesn't even become a priority. If they think they'll be in a place where they will be with other young adults, at a celebration that's worth traveling to, then I think they'll get in a car and go.

John: The level of their participation in the Mass and sacraments sends many of their parents right up the wall. Parents who have got a pretty locked-in understanding of what is necessary in order to go to Communion see many of their own young adults who they know are not churchgoers get up and go to Communion with Mom and Dad just like there is no problem at all. And for them there is no problem. They do not separate out going to church and not going to Communion. And it dawns on me that many of them are the first product of post-Vatican II religious education. Those were very difficult times for Catholic schools and parishes. The kids weren't open to receiving a lot and we weren't sure what we were doing. So they practice without the belief behind the practice.

Martha: Let me play devil's advocate: We hear from young adults that the church is aimed at youngsters, families, and old people, and there is no

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place for them. But in many situations they allow themselves to be overlooked. They don't always recognize the value of a multigenerational experience. If they're sure that there will be a community of other young adults with similar life experiences, they will get in the car and go. But they won't drive to their parish around the block to see what they might bring. Some young adults don't have a connection with the other members of the assembly.

John: I think that they just do not see personal value in the church. It just does not speak to them. It's not going to change their life. I don't think that they're going to challenge the system because what they want to know is, "Why have the system in the first place?" We're asking a question here that is not theirs. On the other hand, some have grown up with very positive experiences of the church. They had good experiences through CYO or maybe through a Catholic school, or maybe they came to know some religious leader in their own parish. They were involved in Newman, Catholic campus ministry when they were away at school, and it's the next logical thing. It's always been a functional thing. And then there are those people who have had their life unravel at an early age and have found someone within church circles to be some help to them with their family life, with their own personal life, and it's with these two groups that you sometimes see the pull of loyalty.

What do you think attracts young adults to the church?

Kate: Tragedy. When there's tragedy people run back to church. There's also a small percentage that want to help out in some way, a lot of them are eucharistic ministers or lectors or they work with the CCD or with the teens. Once they're in a place and willing to work, they're given responsibilities because there is such a need.

Margaret: It's community that attracts young adults to the church. There they find others who are willing to support them, struggle, question, and muddle through together. When young people come up against the values of society that are different from the values in their bloodstream, at some point they sit back and ask: "Is this all there is? I'm making money. I'm doing well in my work." St. Augustine says, "Our hearts are restless, God, until they rest in Thee." There's finally a point where we come to realize that there's got to be more to all of this. And then we go to a place where we can be with others who are asking these same questions.

John: Sometimes what attracts young Catholics to church can be found in their criticism. What they criticize is Sunday: the preaching, the hospitality, the music. But they are not criticizing the word of God or Scripture or Holy Communion. They're criticizing elements that evoke what they might be looking for in life. "Does anybody care if I'm here?" So they criticize the lack of hospitality. You'll ask them, "Well, what was Sunday Mass like?" And they'll criticize the preaching which says that they might be looking for some wisdom or inspiration. And they'll criticize bad music because somehow music can lift the soul and so I would wonder if part of what attracts them to church is that it is a place to wonder about your position in life. A place to be inspired. A place to be made welcome. Or a place that somehow tells you that there's more that goes on than meets the eye.

Second, they come because of what's going on in their own lives. People will come in to bury a friend or a parent, to marry, to baptize their child or to be present at the baptism of the next generation. It's the sickness question, the death question, the love question, the rites of passage question, that is brokered and negotiated through the church.

Chuck: It's also a place for some young people to make sense of the turmoil they're experiencing. Whether in their studies, in their workplace, conflicts they might be having in relationships.

Kate: That's especially true when you have people that have had good experiences when they were little, or in Newman or CYO. Then they may come back and say, "It was helpful before, let's try it out now." That's why leadership is so important. There is someone who can provide guidance or a sense of connection and helps to further along the process of finding meaning.

Maree: Let's look at those young adults who go to daily Mass. They don't really always admit it and maybe the percentage is very low but I seem to find that everything in their life is changing and while they might go to Sunday Mass and criticize everything, there's something very comforting about daily Mass which has never changed for them. Though they might be in a different city or in a different town there are those prayers, the things that have happened, have always happened. The rituals have always been the same and that's important. It can be comforting.

John: What pushes younger people toward the church is something innate in all of us, a spirit side to our lives. They live on the business side of the world. They live on the task side of the world. They have gotten their education, they're in school or they're finishing school, and now they're working, and now all the business of life. What pushes at people is the how come, the what does it mean, the where does it fit. It's good Catholic theology that in the secular, the sacred has chosen to root itself. This is the first generation of American Catholics that has grown up in a relatively secular world. A world shaped and formed by television, rock music, by all of those things that have never spoken to the spirit side of their lives. Maybe the secular pushes people to the spirit side.

Chuck: So many go to church and no one talks to anybody else and maybe there's a beautiful handshake and a kiss of peace but there's not a real warmth or joy.

John: Somebody put it to me this way: "Where else do you go in the winter where you spend an hour inside and don't take off your coat?" If you go to a basketball game, you take off your coat. But at church it's: Just passing through, I'll stand for an hour but even my manner of dress says, "I'm not sure I'm buying in." And that's true of all ages. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we

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said, "The Lord be with you. Take off your coat and stay awhile.?"

What can the church learn from young adults?

John: They've taught me that they do not accept a lot of formal religious things because they don't understand them. Yet I have learned from them that there is an innate hunger for meaning. If we want, we can call that faith. Somewhere along the line the quest for meaning, the quest for faith, needs to be translated into religion.

Margaret: The church can learn from young adults that faith and religion is not a package that you buy like a word processing package. Faith is open to endless kinds of explorations and the rest of us don't need to be frightened by that.

John: Young adults are teaching the official church a very painful lesson: that they can live rather well without us, thank you. The question is: Can the church live without them?

Martha: Are these young adults asking us whether they are the last generation of Catholics? There was a book a number of years ago called *Will Our Children Have Faith*? If it was rewritten today we would call it *Will Our Faith Have Children*? Maybe young adults now having children are asking that question too.

Kate: A lot of young adults who have tried to return to the church are being told, "No, you're not registered parishioners." "No, you haven't followed our rules so you can't come in and play ball." I think with a more open, accepting attitude toward everyone, we could make a lot of progress.

John: If the church takes a good look at its young adult population, it would realize that they are the target for the big word we've used for the last ten years—evangelization. We talk about the alienated, we talk about those who have been hurt and harmed. It's time that we realize that the target of evangelization ought to be our own.

Chuck: There is an assumption that in late adolescence/early adulthood, there's a tendency to fall away from the church. Then as people settle down and get rooted and get married, they come back to the church and everything's fine again. I have serious doubts that that's a valid assumption anymore. People who are now young adults didn't come from the structured Catholic families of the forties and fifties. These are the young adults who were raised in the sixties and seventies. Everything was topsy turvy in the church then. These young people didn't know the stability that existed before, So for people in the church to sit back and think, "Oh, they're gonna come back. It's just a phase" may be wrong.

Martha: And how arrogant to assume that they'll come back rather than asking, "Why have they left?"

John: How do we develop a healthy attitude towards our own young people? Is it a passivity that says, "they're out there, and when they come back, once they settle down, then we'll take care of them." Or should we have the attitude that they are number one? We have always prided ourselves on the universality of the Catholic church. Today universal means not just geographical, but different types of people. And our sense of universality today must include all ages. By developing a healthy attitude, an attitude of welcoming, not grilling, an attitude of gracious hospitality, not interrogation, we will be able to say to our own young people, "You are important here. Come and join us." But also go after them. The good shepherd went after the one because he noticed one was missing.

What do you think is the biggest influence on the lives of young adults?

John: When I was growing up, the biggest influence on me was the church. Now I would say that the church would not rank in the top ten influences on American culture.

Martha: Other young adults, peers, colleagues, from a competitive standpoint, from an achieving standpoint, from a success standpoint.

Maree: Anything that is screaming at them the loudest and preaching at them the loudest, is catching their attention. It's the media. It's influencing what cars they drive, what they brush their teeth with, what kind of VCR they're buying, whether or not they're throwing out their albums and buying CDs.

John: I would say there is an emotional coldness. This is a generation that watched war live on television, a generation that has seen every human problem put before them almost every day through some form of television and yet these are situations without answers. After a while you become immune.

"Just once *I'd like to see the gods worship* us!"

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Margaret: A Gallup poll recently reported in the *New York Times* that 90 percent of married couples remain faithful. And 60 percent of these married couples pray together. What amazing information. How much it shatters all our media images. How could married couples remain faithful? I mean we're supposed to be promiscuous, aren't we? These statistics appear once, whereas the Donald and Ivana Trump fiasco is mentioned every single day. So how can faithfulness seem real?

John: But demonizing American culture is a stereotype the church uses. There is also the drive to succeed, to be somebody. We've got to be able to mine the goodness of that and direct people creatively beyond individualism, beyond just taking care of number one. In many ways the Catholic church has become the victim of its own success. Our own families have told us, "Get ahead. Be somebody. Get an education. Try hard." Our church has set up the finest private educational system in the world. Now we are somebody. American Catholics are incredibly successful people.

It's the group of people who have experienced the greatest success, young adults, that is looking for quality leadership from their own church and we can't give it to them. We told them to be the best and the brightest and we have a hard time on Sunday putting the best and the brightest in front of them. What is it about us that doesn't allow us to be as successful in our own leadership as they have become in their own lives? Why won't young people today go into religious life or into any form of church leadership? So many other religious traditions attract their young; the Mormons give a couple years of their life right back to their church. If there is a Lutheran school, it's all taught by people who have gone through Lutheran college. Maybe we have not asked enough of our own young people. We have encouraged their success and asked very little in return.

"Hello, we've just moved in next door and to save time we've done this video of our lives so far."

How about when they return? What draws them? What makes them come back to the church? Or what keeps them as a part of things?

Martha: Why are you here? I was invited. The simplest thing. Kids bring them back. That's always a good one.

Margaret: Moments of tragedy.

Maree: A desperate search for community. And a need to belong and the need to believe that there are others like themselves out there.

Kate: And that realization that life has got to be more than just a job.

John: That's why we have to surprise people who come with preconceptions. We're not always sure what their agenda is or why they've been away. We have to surprise them with graciousness, with the sense that there is a place for them here. How do you reach out? How do you invite? How do you thank? How do you follow-up? It can't be just clear the parking lot out and get the next crowd in for Mass. Remember names. Send a note. Thank them for coming.

Margaret: I was talking to a young man recently at a volleyball tournament. He told me that he was moving to New Jersey. His job was changing. So I wrote to him and I wished him good luck and I gave him Martha's address in New Jersey and I gave him Michael Mullen's address. I saw him again a few weeks ago. The job did not work out. He's back on Long Island. Now he will do anything for me. The information about New Jersey. The connection to young adults in New Jersey. Knowing that someone cared enough. That the church cared enough.

Maree: Some of us are meeting them without trying to say, "Well, you've got to believe what the church believes." Some of those things are what is causing them anger and disapproval. While we can understand where they're coming from, we can't necessarily change it. And we're not necessarily saying that there isn't some grave matter. Sometimes it happens that you aren't just right or wrong. But we don't have to win them over. We can meet them where they're at and welcome them.

John: In line with that, our job is frustrating because we are only as good as the people who head up the parishes. The Catholic church is an experience in parish life primarily and we can say all the right things. We can say that there's room and welcome. But that is going to be brokered in a relationship that they find shared with them in the local community. And if it's not a welcoming community, if the attitude is "You better have your act together. You better not come near me," then we are just mere words and they know it. We can't fool them. Perhaps the best thing we can do in helping them return is to direct them to places where they will be more welcomed at this time in their life. Where they will find people like themselves. Where they will find preaching that is intelligible. Probably the one revelation of God in the Scripture that doesn't get enough air time is the God of surprises. When you least expected something, God happened. Sometimes when you most expect it, God didn't happen. In other words, the surprising God worked. Look at the wonderful story of the pharisee and the publican. Jesus asked, "Whose prayer did God answer?" The people said, "The guy in the front because he did it the right way." Jesus said, "Wrong, the guy in the back because he did it the only way he knew how." And so we've created something that says if you're right, you'll be listened to. Where the God of surprises says, "If you're here, welcome." We don't have to ask a lot of probing clubbish questions. "Have you been married before? Are you in the state of grace?" I can't imagine Jesus asking those questions. Not that they're not important. But what's more important is, "You are here, thank God." □

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HERE COMES EVERYBODY

John Shea

When the subject is Catholic identity, it is not long before James Joyce is quoted: "Catholicism means here comes everybody." Even if Joyce is off by four-fifths, this means Catholics will have to "break up into groups." And this is precisely what is being done.

Contemporary Catholicism is a series of gatherings. A reductionistic definition of Catholicism is that it is a group of people meeting to draft an ultimatum to give to another group who are meeting to draft an ultimatum to give to them. That quip may not be fair, but it does acknowledge the plurality and suggest a bit of the antagonism at work. In fact, there is no better way to get an impressionistic picture of the Catholic world than to get around to a few meetings.

Try a planning session of a baptismal preparation team tiptoeing around the question of new parents and weekly Mass attendance; a study group on the women's pastoral wondering how dare they; a seminary faculty trying to define priesthood within a multi-ministerial church; a weekend for engaged couples that has a session on budgeting but none on faith; bishops and priests discussing sexuality in the shadow of lawsuits; CEOs of Catholic health-care facilities talking survival, market, and mission; a faith and work group discussing how to fire workers in a "Christian" way; religious educators struggling with how to pass on a tradition they themselves are in conflict with; a RCIA group with their necks stretched toward the Easter Vigil wondering how to "fit in" the Creed; pastors and principals resorting to petitionary prayer over the school budget; divorced folks meeting in a church to be angry at the church; Catholic Charities trying to combine advocacy and service; a family life conference wondering what to do with birth control; a parish mission stalled on what to do with reconciliation; youth ministers discussing drugs and sex; and, of course, liturgies—all types of liturgies, in all types of places, with all types of people. Add to this list the group of your choice.

When people ask who are present at these meetings, the usual response is "to break it down" according to church status or church roles. Laypeople, bishops, sisters, deacons, priests, brothers is one line-up; ordinary, pastor, associate pastor, pastoral associate, DRE, youth minister, school principal, catechist is another way of dividing the players. In recent years under the inspiration of feminist concerns the categories which are sometimes suggested are quite simply but significantly—women and men.

How the participants are named is important. Naming is the beginning of relating. The designations of the players will determine how they will contribute to one another and to the common task. I belonged to a theological faculty that was divided up into traditional categories of systematics-moral-Bible-history-ministry. The moral department changed its name to Christian Life. That, it was noted, made everyone else Christian Death. Naming is not incidental, and renaming can open up new possibilities.

It may be refreshing to rename the participants at the meetings of the Catholic world. What if we looked at ourselves as young adults and older adults? (That, of course, leaves out the two most creative groups—the young children and adolescents. But what is a contemporary meeting without someone being discriminated against?) If we listen to the voices of young adults—be they, in other categories, laywomen, priests, sisters, liturgists, etc.—we may hear the future concerns of Catholicism. One way of regenerating Catholicism is to listen carefully to those who will be doing the "generating." What follows is an anecdotal, totally unscientific, and highly prejudicial exercise in eavesdropping.

In a recent meeting of CEOs of Catholic health-care facilities the topic was mission and management. How does their basic identity that advertises them as Christian and Catholic influence the way they go about the business of health care? The question to the group was, "Recall a time when you made a decision which you think reflected the mission statement of your facility."

A young CEO, around thirty-five, told a story about a woman who was ambivalent about admitting her husband into a nursing home. She admitted him, then took him out. This happened twice. At one moment she felt she could do what was necessary, at another moment she knew she could not. The CEO sat down with her, had a number of conversations, and finally helped her come to a firm and informed decision that she could live with. She permanently readmitted her husband. To my ears he handled this situation with great sensitivity, compassion, and skill. It was obvious to me why this man, even at a young age, was a CEO.

He finished his story with a question to the group. "I still don't know whether I did the right thing. There was a lot of disruption in the staff because of this woman, a lot of reduplication

REV. JOHN SHEA *is professor of systematic theology at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois.*

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of paper work. I had to soothe a lot of feathers. Also she took up more time than I had to give. I don't know whether it was worth it." He wanted a response from the group.

This young man is a skilled administrator, trained in the theory and practice of organizational development, especially as it relates to health care. He has a deeper set of values that guide the way he implements his working knowledge and skills. These values are mostly implicit, assumptions that are not directly reflected on. In crunch situations these assumed values come to the surface and strongly influence the course of events. Yet he is not sure these are the "right" values. How does he balance compassion and care for the vacillating wife with staff disruption? He knows how to handle it on the level of skills, but he is unsure "whether it is all worth it."

I do not think he is alone. Young Catholics in all walks of life have developed extensive knowledge and skills. Their underlying values are always present and are implicitly operative. What is needed is some explicit reflection to connect what they do with who they are. Their impressive technical abilities need guidance from deeper values and convictions. They want some decision-making procedures that can affirm and challenge their instincts.

The young CEO had no sooner finished his story then the prescribed question was asked, "How do you think what you have done reflected your mission statement?" He answered, "I don't know. Actually, I never read it. The 'brothers' (the sponsoring community), walking around the place, carry the Catholic identity. They are the living mission statement." It was eloquently said, and you could see uniformed brothers walking down halls and slipping into rooms, suffusing the medical atmosphere with the spirit of Catholicism.

Ironically, what he was looking for was in the mission statement. But he connected that dimension of health care with the brothers. He saw it as a clean division of labor. He does his part and the brothers do theirs. Yet there is a real question whether this arrangement will continue. What happens when there are fewer and fewer brothers? If they are the living carriers of the Catholic identity of the health-care facility, what will happen to that identity when the brothers do not constitute a significant presence? The young CEO's question raised one issue; his perception raised another.

What is happening in the Catholic world is a search for people explicitly to continue the Catholic enterprise. Who will be the new primary carriers of the Catholic identity? If priests and religious are, in the eyes of many, the symbols of Catholic presence, who will be the new symbols? More importantly, who wants to be a new carrier? I do not see a lot of people raising their hands. Many want to be a significant part of the enterprise, but few want to be responsible for its Catholicity.

Whoever these new primary carriers are, they will not possess the Catholic identity in the old, clerical fashion. It will not be located in their persons—instead, the identity will belong to the whole membership. This is a popular ecclesiological move. It is rooted in the spirit of Vatican II which considers the whole church as the People of God before it mentions diverse ministries. Therefore, everyone in her or his own way is responsible for the catholicity of the operation. The primary carriers do not usurp this fundamental identity, they facilitate it. They ensure the mission, they do not take ownership of it.

There is a rumble among people who teach the Catholic faith in high schools and colleges that students "don't know much." This remark covers a lot of territory. It means there is a lack of information about basic Catholic history, beliefs, and practices. Most may have heard of Vatican II, but few can name a document or major idea that came from that council. It also describes a mental jumble of mammoth proportions. The Incarnation means "man became God" and Catholics believe in the "transfiguration of the Mass." Some view this situation as deplorable. Others see it as unprecedented opportunity.

A young woman who teaches in a Catholic high school in the Boston area is one of the "opportunity" folks. She does not lament what her students do not not know but struggles to get them to the "heart and depth" of Catholic faith. "How do I get them to the level of spirit so they can see possibilities and feel free, so they can go against their culture if they want to? How do I get them to know that religion is about the best that is in them? How do I get them to know life and faith go together?"

The voice of this young adult suggests the future of Catholicism is tied to personal spiritual depth. Catholicism has often been equated with beliefs and behaviors. To be Catholic is to believe such and such and to do this and that. What has often been missing is an accompanying spiritual sensitivity. The present moment provides the opportunity to include beliefs and behaviors in Catholic identity but to ground them in more fundamental sensibilities.

Catholic identity is ultimately located in a spirit, an ethos, a sensibility, a structure of imagination. It is deeper than mind and action, but it directs and energizes both of them. There are many aspects to this foundational orientation. The Catholic sense, it has been claimed, stresses peoplehood, tradition, community, and rationality. Furthermore, it is a spirit of inclusion which sees analogies rather than disjunctions between all beings. It has an affinity for both/and rather than either/or statements. There is also a sense of hospitality, festivity, and "at-homeness" with the earth and people. But by far the most celebrated manifestation of the Catholic spirit is sacramental. The structure of Catholic imagination perceives the world and God in intimate communion. The processes of the world are shot through with divine encouragement and support. God is not a distant reality who is reluctant to make contact. The divine is close; the task is to adjust our minds and hearts to this subtle and supple presence. This sacramental perception unifies Catholic identity, providing a way to approach the earth, people, Christ, and the church.

It seems to me that locating Catholic identity at this depth is a testimony to the reality of Spirit. It is a holding fast to the truth of our ultimate grounding in God. This emphasis on Spirit is not to the detriment of Catholic perspectives on the physical, psychological, sociological, and political dimensions of human life. Rather it provides their deepest energy and their overall direction. Catholic identity cannot be constructed on anything less than the reality of divine presence.

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"What are they going to make me do to get this baby baptized?" She is twenty-two, a young Catholic adult who has, to put it mildly, an ambivalent attitude toward the insitutional church. She views the situation from a "them" and "me" point of view. She wants her baby baptized and "they" are going to make her jump through some hoops. She wants to know how bad it is going to be.

Her one-line question with its not-so-veiled resentment suggests a major question for the church's future. Is parish ministry going to be perceived as in league with the concerns of people or as placing one more burden on them? Does the parish say to the young, "How can we help you with the demands of relationships, family, and work?" or does it say, "Here is what you must do to get whatever service you may want." In other words, how is the local church going to relate to the lives of people? Is it going to build on the existing dynamics of their lives or is it going to add its own sets of institutional demands?

The most creative ministerial efforts attempt to change the young woman's question, "We do not want to make you do something in order for you to get something. We want to know how we can help you raise your child for faith and life." This changing of the question from "them and me" to "we" often means a revisioning of parish. The parish should be a place where the important conversations go on. If these conversations are done in community, there is a better chance that some life-giving wisdom will be arrived at. The ingredients of these conversations are people's experience, cultural perspectives, and the retrieval of the tradition. The conversation is about what people are interested in, how to love, work, and play in American society.

This pastoral strategy might be seen as an answer to the provocative question that Jurgen Moltmann asks: "Does the community have a mission or does the mission have a community?" What is fundamental is the mission that comes from creation, and that is to engage in loving relationships and to work in solidarity, justice, and peace. In the effort to accomplish this, people band together. Their community supports and encourages this fundamental mission of creation. In Christianity this support comes from ongoing communion with the realities revealed in the event of Jesus Christ. So the parish provides many different ways of initiation and participation in those realities. But the ongoing concerns of love, work, and play remain central.

Even for people who value this vision, it is not clear how it will be implemented. It is an attempt to continue and revitalize what a past tradition called the "lay vocation in the world." It sees Catholicism not as a lump, "a separable something," but as leaven. It is meant to permeate and transform the whole of life. This theological vision is attractive; the accompanying pastoral strategies are struggling to be born. Many of the questions and criticisms of young adults push in this direction.

When people in leadership positions in the church ask about young adults, they often assume they must analyze their lives, diagnose their needs, and offer them services. The question is phrased, "Are we caring for the next generation? Are the needs of young adults being met?" This is certainly a positive way to go about it.

Another way is to listen to what young people say about what they see, not to ask them about themselves but to watch them react to "things Catholic." The future of Catholicism will emerge from the interaction of their perceptions and the questions they ask about the present shape of things.

Selective eavesdropping suggests the future of Catholicism will be tied up with a concern about values and work, with the question of who will be the primary carriers of the Catholic identity, with how to find, express, and communicate the spiritual reality at the heart of Catholicism, and with how parish life will cooperate with the essential concerns of life in American culture and society.

Obviously, more conversations are needed. □

AFTERWORD

Robert J. Egan

When we talk about young adult Catholics, we are usually talking about a crisis. We divide among ourselves on how to interpret this phenomenon. Maybe our young are leaving the church because they are selfish and callow, seduced by the materialism, the consumerism, the secularism of our culture. Or perhaps, in some way, we ourselves are to blame. Perhaps the version of Catholicism we have made available to them is of an inferior and inadequate quality. Then, if we are losing our best and our brightest, maybe it serves us right. It serves us right either because our teachings are vague and compromised and accommodating (the claim from the Right), or because our teachings are archaic and oppressive and irrelevant (the claim from the Left).

How disturbing the facts then! John Coleman's data suggest that these familiar rhetorical strategies may be based on false impressions. Of course we are having a problem handing on the faith, but in the United States, we are having less of a problem than any other religious community. That is not a reason for complacency, but it definitely is food for thought.

In addition, in this culture we have a problem not just with handing on the faith, but with the handing on of *anything*. For the "handing on" of things—ideas, meanings, symbols, stories, practices, judgments of value—is what we mean by "tradition," and we Americans live in an anti-tradition tradition, a tradition of being at odds with tradition. It is a kind of amnesia on principle. Of course, in any culture, adolescents must struggle to come loose from their family environments, to achieve sufficient autonomy to go out into the world and build their own lives. This is

ROBERT J. EGAN, S.J., *is the assistant to the academic vice president and teaches theology and spirituality at Gonzaga University in Spokane.*

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never accomplished in a way that is neat. They must pass through a stage that is questioning, critical, distancing, maybe rebellious. This may involve aesthetic judgments and social and political attitudes, as well as moral and religious commitments. They will notice things like empty ritual, phoniness, casual hypocrisy. They will band together with others in their age-group. This is natural and ought to be anticipated. And in any culture there are conflicting claims on the attention and loyalty of its young people. Different factions and parties and subcultures will come to compete for their allegiance.

But in our culture the process is prolonged and very complicated. For the middle class, the whole period from eighteen to thirty may become a kind of experiment in possibility. Young Americans have to "decide for themselves" what they will value, what they will believe, where they will live and work, what (if anything) they will stand for, what they will do for a living. They have the freedom, the resources, the mobility, the exposure to pluralism, to make these issues into choices, even if these multiplied possibilities may cause anxiety and can become debilitating. To make all these choices, they require a prolonged period of suspended judgment, a time to be "open-minded," a little suspicious, and relatively uncommitted, especially in regard to "institutions." This tradition of being against tradition, this pluralism and need to choose, is aggravated by the pace of social change, the complexity of our society, and the strain of intergenerational relations. This is how things are for young adults in our kind of culture.

We could probably all agree that there are a lot of things wrong with our culture (though we should always remember to ask ourselves: Compared to what...?). So one essential part of preaching the good news will be the effort to liberate people from inadequate ideas and habits of the imagination. The Catholic community has many resources—symbolic, intellectual, liturgical, mystical—for alerting its younger members to the moral and intellectual deficiencies, for example, of individualism, of positivism, of unfettered capitalism, of secularism, of racism and sexism.

But not everyone will see these deficiencies. We will lose some of our members to these other points of view. As Catholics, of course, we hate to lose anybody—the James Joyce quote again. But in this culture, where religion is perceived as an issue of voluntary association, where everybody must decide for himself or herself, we should expect to lose the firm commitment of many young adults for some period of time, and we should expect to lose (and also to gain) some members—to and from more conservative and more liberal forms of faith, and to and from various kinds of unbelief. This all seems pretty obvious, but a lot of talk about young adult Catholics seems to ignore it.

Each phase of life has its own tasks and challenges. Young adults are trying to establish autonomy, strengthen their egos, define their identities, explore their sexuality, develop their competencies. The resources of our tradition are not perceived to be so relevant to these issues. We wait for the "tragedies," for loneliness, suffering, confusion, or death to make an opening for faith. It is reassuring to think that our tradition can be a rich resource of hope and consolation in such moments, but there are some resources in the tradition—including the four Gospels—that also have something to say about criticism and autonomy, about a refusal of prudishness and legalism and an affirmation of the goodness of life.

But clearly the concerns of this phase of life do not find us Catholics at our best: What to make of human sexuality? How to feel about manhood and womanhood? What is required by intimacy and committed love? How to choose work or plan a career? On these particular topics Catholicism tends to be muddled and unhelpful.

It is possible to grow up a Catholic, after all, and have no access to an intelligent and vital version of Catholicism. Because the task of young adulthood is to find a vision, to commit oneself to a philosophy of life, to find a meaningful form of work, this question of "versions" of Catholicism is very important here. The church has an interest in making widely available to young adults a reflective, articulate, and self-critical kind of Catholicism, a Catholicism that has room for different points of view, but a Catholicism that nevertheless has a teaching about human existence and the mystery of God, about sin and redemption and an immortal love revealed in Jesus Christ, a Catholicism that stands for something, even for something that might be worth living and dying for. All young adult Catholics must face this question—of whether or not the version of Catholicism in which they were raised is really an adequate version of the tradition and the church has to help them ask and answer this question.

Having said this much, it seems to me that our talk about young adult Catholics is often pointless and evasive. Rather than asking how we can make the faith more believable to our younger members, we should usually be asking why it is not more believable to ourselves. It is so easy for us middle-class Americans to fall into the market-model for thinking about the faith (or anything else). Then it becomes a question of how to sell the faith, of how to get our young people to buy it. But this is never the relevant question.

How do we hand on anything we love or care about? How do we hand on the inspirations for our committed service and the causes of our joy? How do we hand on an intellectual tradition, a mystical tradition, a symbolic and sacramental tradition, a prophetic and politically engaged tradition, a tradition of valuing community, in a culture like our own? For the most part, I suppose, we do these things by modeling, by showing what they look like in practice, by loving, praying, forgiving, welcoming, by struggling for honesty and justice and freedom.

Like Michael Hunt, I am one of those who fear that one day Catholicism will mean: "There goes everybody!" Like him I am surprised, over and over, that so many keep coming back. I don't believe that those of us in ministry should take much credit for this; I think they keep coming back in spite of all the strangeness and goofiness in our provision and organization of ministry in the church. Andrew Greeley, as I understand him, says it's because they love the religion, because they enjoy being Catholics. This is why, even in these later modern and postmodern times, I am still hopeful that we will finds ways to hand on our faith, this ancient, mysterious, argumentative, and life-giving Catholic faith, which is God's gracious gift to us. □

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(Continued from page 480)

but abrasive educator. At first he was not universally popular in the black community; but once his former white supporters turned against him a year after his arrival, most black teachers, students, and politicians began circling their wagons in defense of "their" superintendent.

The white board members insisted that Dr. Roussell's administrative shortcomings, and not his race, provoked their refusal to renew his contract for another three years. The black board members dismissed the complaints about Roussell's dictatorial style as "nit-picking"; after all, one of them pointed out, the superintendent had not been sexually abusing students. They announced their intention to boycott all board meetings until and unless Roussell's contract was extended and blacks were given control of the board. Since black students made up 70 percent of total enrollment, they regarded this demand as a simple matter of "majority rule."

The Sanders group quickly assumed a leading role in the protests, identifying their old foe Smitherman as the villain behind the scenes. "King Joe" was moved by jealousy of Roussell, they said, because the educator made more money ($80,000 a year) than the mayor ($64,000). In turn, Smitherman charged that "Queen Rose" and her fellow lawyers were deliberately provoking a racial confrontation in order to get control of the school board and its $18 million budget.

"Our only power is the power to disrupt," said state Senator Sanders, and he and his fellow protesters used that power freely. They threatened to "close this city down" unless Roussell's contract was extended and the six white members of the school board fired. They launched boycotts of the leading local bank and various local gas stations (all owned by whites with relatives on the school board), picketed the local newspaper (for "unfair coverage"), pitched tents on the lawn outside City Hall, and disrupted meetings of such majority-white groups as the American Cancer Society.

While the protestors failed to "close Selma down," they did succeed in closing its schools for a week. Disruptions at the high school and middle schools created panic among many parents, who began withdrawing their kids from the public schools. Hundreds of white kids found refuge in Selma's private academies, and a surprising number of blacks transferred to the county school system.

The disruptions destroyed most of Dr. Roussell's remaining support in the white community. Psychiatrist David Hodo had organized a biracial group, Citizens to Save Our Schools, in support of Roussell; he watched in anguish as his group was scattered by the storm of increasing racial polarization.

In a bizarre reversal of the school integration crises of the 1960s, it was the white parents who came forward to ask for federal troops to protect their children's right to attend public schools. "If the federal government could send troops so that eleven black kids could attend high school in Little Rock," asked manufacturer Otey Crisman, "can't it also send help so that five hundred white kids can attend Selma High?"

Crisman's public appeals for integration, which back in 1965 would have probably won him the epithet "nigger-lover" and economic reprisals from white supremacists, evoked a very different response in 1990. Several of his black employees walked out and publicly charged him with "hatred for black people." With her characteristic flair, Mrs. Sanders went a step further by denouncing the manufacturer as a "real Communist."

State troops were in fact sent to re-open the schools, giving Mrs. Sanders the opportunity to relive 1965 by filling the TV screens with shots of black demonstrators confronting Alabama troopers. The troopers, many of whom were black, disappointed their taunters by responding with smiles rather than tear gas.

To "Rose's Raiders," as the demonstrators came to be called, their crusade was in part a re-enactment of the 1965 struggle over voting rights. When some of the "Raiders" were arrested after a melee outside the mayor's office, they promptly dubbed the incident "Bloody Monday."

The demonstrators' greatest weakness, according to *Dallas Times* reporter Bryan Woolley, was their lack of an obvious villain like Sheriff Clark. Woolley, who as a white minister took part in the original march, was not impressed by the similarities between 1965 and 1990. "The voting rights movement was led by ministers, this is led by lawyers," Woolley said. "That movement had a clear goal, this one has half a dozen, and seems to be striking out in all directions."

Mrs. Sanders denies this charge vehemently. To her the issue is not simply a local dispute over Roussell's abilities or the make-up of the school board, but one of national significance: "the right to an equal education." She has called for the passage of a constitutional amendment to outlaw "racial tracking" in schools.

According to her, the Selma schools had instituted a "racial tracking" system in 1971 to confine 95 percent of the black students at Selma High to the lowest level while allowing over 90 percent of whites to take high level college preparatory courses. If Dr. Roussell were dismissed, she told her followers, their children would not be allowed to take algebra or foreign languages.

The charge bewildered many Selmians, who asked how such a conspiracy could operate when the principals and guidance counselors at most Selma schools are black. Selma High School finally released statistics showing that most of its students, black and white, were receiving the standard diploma, and a majority of those receiving the advanced diploma were black. However, this has not shaken the faith of Mrs. Sanders's disciples that they are in fact the victims of a sinister conspiracy.

The continued demonstrations have had a marked effect on the Selma schools. The "white flight" that began in February continued over the summer, with a number of white teachers joining a host of white students in their exodus.

"Selma's private schools ought to give Rose an award for being the best recruiter they've ever had," observed city judge Vaughan Russell. "Two years ago they were having financial problems; now their classrooms are bulging and they're having to hire new teachers."

White community leaders expressed distress over this "re-segregation" of Selma High, and a number of black moderates (including Pastor Reese) urged whites not to abandon the public

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schools. The protest leaders, however, responded with indifference. Attorney J.L. Chestnut, whose law firm filed suit after suit during the '70s to force total integration of the Selma school system, now shrugs when warned that "white flight" may create an all-black system for Selma as it has for surrounding counties. "I attended a segregated school system," he says, "and so did Mayor Smitherman, and we both survived."

Indeed, some Selma blacks, like district Judge Nathanael Walker, fondly recall "the good old days" at all-black R.B. Hudson High, when all the teachers were blacks, the class valedictorian and the homecoming queen were always black, and so forth. To Chestnut, the loss of such role models is a grievous thing; for that reason, he ranks having "a black superintendent in Selma...[as] important to black school children as learning to read or count." And Montgomery's African-American bookstore, Roots & Wings, holds regular lectures on the "disadvantages of desegregation."

"I think it's the continuing poverty that has disillusioned so many people with integration," says Father Roger LaCharite, my colleague and director of the Selma-based Edmundite Missions. "It's like William Butler Yeats said after the Irish Revolution, that Ireland had its freedom and the poor were still breaking stones."

Some Northern whites have also lost faith in integration, he says. "Back in the '60s, a few of our Yankee supporters were very critical of us for having set up separate schools and hospitals for blacks when we first came to Alabama in 1937. Recently, though, people have been scolding us for having one of the few integrated parishes in Selma," he says. "Back in 1971 the archbishop of Mobile instructed us to merge our black mission with the local white parish, and we did so. I'm very proud of Queen of Peace, which is 55 percent white, 45 percent black, and one of the most beautiful, vibrant parishes I know of.

"Well, last year two visitors from the North, a priest and a nun, told me it was a scandal that Selma's black Catholics were having their native spirituality contaminated by association with whites. They asked me how on earth the Edmundites could justify serving an integrated parish."

The actual twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in March came as something of an anticlimax. No Hollywood stars showed up for the benefit concert, and the projected voting rights museum for Selma is still only a dream. The re-enactment of "Bloody Sunday" with fake tear gas was held, but for a smaller crowd than had been originally expected.

In late April, Dr. Roussell worked out a financial settlement with the school board and resigned. The white board members then chose veteran black educator James Carter as interim superintendent, raising hopes that a time of community healing might be at hand.

Chestnut Sanders's response to the Carter appointment was to have warrants sworn out for the arrest of the white school board members, on charges of having made the selection in an illegal secret meeting. (Mrs. Sanders had stated previously that her people would never accept anyone chosen by whites, "even if they bring Martin Luther King back from the grave.")

The firm vowed to rally five thousand demonstrators from across the country to protest at the reopening of Selma's public schools on August 20. Selma's schools were already 90 percent black, announced Commissioner Varner, "and may soon be 100 percent."

James Carter may not be a resurrected King, but he proved remarkably effective in rallying biracial support for the schools. Only fifty demonstrators showed up outside Selma High on the 20th, and on the next day there were none. By week's end Carter smilingly announced that "white flight" had been brought under control—1,066 of the 5,328 kids in school, or 20 percent, were still white.

At this point the city's black businessman approached Mayor Smitherman to seek a settlement of the school board crisis. After a week of intense negotiations, black and white leaders agreed to set up a "rotating majority" on the school board—with the board's first black majority taking power as soon as all school board litigation was resolved. Chestnut Sanders grimly agreed to drop its lawsuits against the city and the school board, and the city in turn dropped over one hundred thirty criminal charges pending against "Rose's Raiders."

So Selma's racial conflicts of 1990 ended not in violence and federal intervention, as those of 1965 had, but in a negotiated settlement worked out by local leaders. Thus it is no wonder Dr. Julius Brown, the first black president of Wallace Community College, proclaimed August 27 "a day for *dancing*!" □

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SCREEN

TOO HOT, TOO COOL

MALLE'S 'MAY FOOLS'

May Fools is one of Louis Malle's milder works. It's too richly textured to be completely forgettable, yet too diffuse to sear itself into your thoughts. The characters are fairly tame, occasionally messy, mainly friendly animals. They follow their instincts, but their rule-breaking is kept within the family.

The shocks this film delivers are minor, fleeting ones. This is a holiday movie, drenched in country sunshine. Making it may have been a sort of working vacation for its director. And the easy-goingness that is *May Fools*' most attractive quality turns out to be also its main limitation.

A funeral sets the plot in motion. In the French countryside, in May 1968, a very old woman dies in her large, rambling, somewhat moth-eaten house. Her sixtyish widower son, Milou (Michel Piccoli), calls his clan home for the funeral. From diverse parts come his much-married foreign correspondent brother with his English wife; his orphaned niece Claire, an antiques dealer with a lesbian lover in tow; his daughter (Miou-Miou), accurately described by Terrence Rafferty (in the *New Yorker*) as a "savagely uptight bourgeoise," with her husband and children; and, after a long delay, the correspondent's alienated son, Pierre-Alain, who is aflame with the idealism of the student revolution in which he has just been participating in Paris.

Funerals—like weddings, birthday parties, Christmas gatherings, etc.—provide effective frameworks for dramas. They bring together relatives who haven't seen each other in years and who then fill each other in while preparing meals, downing drinks, dressing corpses, decorating Christmas trees, etc. After the exposition is over, the characters are then free to make passes and hurl whisky bottles, exchange confidences and insults, dredge up ancient stories and bury equally ancient hatchets. But Malle and his scenarist, Jean-Claude Carrière, don't use their funeral framework in a mechanical way. Unable to inter the corpse with due ceremony because the student strike has paralyzed the undertaking business along with everything else in the country, the body lies in state as Milou and kin proceed to enjoy good food, fine weather, and one another's company. Information about their pasts is conveyed loosely, casually, as much by gesture and glance as by words.

But another function, more to the director's essential purpose, is served by the funeral. An unwritten but firm code of conduct is due the rites of death, and when these May fools transgress this code—and, being Malle creatures, they will transgress—characteristic Malle *frissons* are produced. Examples: Milou sincerely mourns his mother's passing but that doesn't keep him from

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trying to grope his pretty housekeeper-mistress while the corpse lies in the next room; a politically hip priest, reading prayers over the corpse, sidles over to a radio broadcasting news about the Paris strike, and turns up the volume; Milou, keeping vigil beside the body, sees his granddaughter bending over the corpse and, watching her short skirt creeping up, can't help ogling her (but when a priapic truckdriver remarks on the girl's blossoming nubility, the old landowning satyr puts the man of the road in his place with an icy stare); inspired by reports of the Parisian students' street bacchanalias, the entire funeral party drunkenly carouses through the room containing the casket while the family cat, as conservative as any animal must be, hisses its disapproval of the commotion. None of these scenes shock as the killings in Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* or the incest in *Murmur of the Heart*. They are nevertheless jolting enough to keep us sitting up straight.

The one deeply distrubing element in *May Fools* is the character of the niece, Claire, played with bottled-up fury by Dominique Blanc. It is not her lesbianism that shocks, but the resentment that ceaselessly smolders within her. Her parents having been killed in an auto accident, Claire was raised by her grandmother who emotionally hobbled her, an upbringing that produced a woman who cannot forgive, who can barely smile, who plays the piano in a fury (Claude Debussy's *General Lavine*!), who must control every situation, who slaps her ditzy ballerina-lover around every time the girl gives a man a smile. The slaps don't work: the girl falls in love with Pierre-Alain. And so, when the funeral party grows randy as well as noisy, Claire proposes orgy and offers herself not to any man in the room but to the one who must most repel her, the student's truck-driving pal, Grimaldi, a neanderthal. As she starts to disrobe, Claire has a tight, terrifying smile on her face. She isn't doing this just to make her straying lover jealous. She is immolating herself. It's at this point that *May Fools* takes on a surprising turbulence and psychological power.

And it is also at this point that the movie goes off the rails. Some panicked wealthy neighbors burst in with an ill-founded rumor: the student revolutionaries are rampaging throughout the country, doing violence to any prosperous-looking person they encounter. Rather improbably, everyone in the funeral party believes this report and, most improbably, the young revolutionary Pierre-Alain starts to fear for his own skin, too. But would he who agitated alongside other students with backgrounds just as bourgeois as his own really accept so readily the notion that his former pals are prepared to string up all the children of the middle class? That he does believe it, and that he does flee with all his relatives into the countryside, smacks of plot expedience.

But expedience to what end? Why did Malle want his characters to hit the road? I think that there may have been two reasons.

First, the comic flight into the countryside cools the movie off just when the self-loathing of Claire threatens to heat it up, in fact, threatens to over-heat it. Malle may have realized, mid-production, that Claire's rage and its consequences, though fascinating, were proving too disturbing for a movie that he intended as mild, relaxed, sunny fare.

Second, Malle's scenarist, Carrière, once wrote an excellent

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satirical fantasy for Buñuel, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, which portrayed monstrous paragons of the middle class in a manner that was one part Simenon and three parts Lewis Carroll. A recurring motif was a series of shots showing the main characters puffing away in formal dining clothes while trudging down an endless country road. By sending Milou and kin down another country road, perhaps Carrière was harking back, consciously or not, to his earlier work for Buñuel. But the conceit that worked for the Spanish magician doesn't serve as well for the French realist. Malle, having employed so much screen time making his characters solid and complex, now must try to make them serve as allegorical figures as well. It doesn't work.

In a recent radio interview, Malle said that one of his inspirations for *May Fools* was a performace by Piccoli as Gaev in *The Cherry Orchard*. The Chekhovian source is patent: If Milou is a Gallicized Gaev (or Ranevskaya), then the resentful, money-minded Claire is a feminine Lopakhin; Pierre-Alain is as idealistic a goof as Trofimov; and the overworked family retainer recalls the ancient Firs. Yet, because *May Fools* is so convincingly evocative of the France of 1968, these parallels only hit us after the movie is over. In fact, the better parts of *May Fools* never seem derivative because Chekhov's good influence has been absorbed. But when Malle tries to emulate the strategies of an artist who is as alien to him as Buñuel, we feel like crying, "Workman, stick to your lathe!"

RICHARD ALLEVA

BOOKS

Vintage Donleavy...a wonderful gallop

A SINGULAR COUNTRY
J.P. Donleavy
W.W. Norton, $18.95, 198 pp.

Elizabeth Shannon

When J.P. Donleavy's novel, *The Ginger Man*, was published in the early 1960s, it was my favorite novel of that year, the first of its genre that I had read—books by Americans explaining Ireland and the Irish. I laughed my way through it, and eagerly opened its two successors, *A Singular Man* and *The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B*. I was not only disappointed but mystified. The wild, whacky antics of the Ginger Man had turned into such dense parody that I found them incomprehensible and—the worst of Irish sins—boring!

A decade later, I moved to Ireland and, lo and behold, within days of arriving, I spotted the author himself, strolling along Grafton Street looking like an advertisement for *Country Life*, more Irish than any Irishman would have dared aspire. The tweeds were crisp and pressed, the beard was trimmed, and begob, the shoes were polished to a luster that would have allowed their wearer to look down and wink at the reflection. And wasn't there an after-whiff of something delicious as he passed by?

It seemed only fair that an author-gentleman of such satirical effort deserved to be read again, the streets of Dublin being populated as they were in those days by rosy-cheeked gentlemen in gray or blue worsted that hadn't felt the flat side of an iron since the day they were bought, and the only shine to be seen was on their seats and elbows. But alas, not even the tweeds and the authentic walking stick could turn me on to Mr. Donleavy's prose again—until now, another decade later, when I opened *A Singular Country*.

As Mr. Donleavy says, not everyone in Ireland writes, "but don't expect very often to come across the few that don't." Native or stranger, if one can hold a pencil one can't be in Ireland for more that forty-eight hours before one is compelled to write about it. (Did I not open the *Boston Globe* this very morning and turn to the science section for my weekly education on quarks and stars, only to find Chet Raymo, our local physicist/journalist, has gone on a little holiday to the auld sod and quick as a fax is turning out copy about the alarming destruction of hedgerows in rural Ireland?) Mr. Donleavy has felt compelled to explain the Irish to us once again, but this time, to my ear, he has not only got it all right, it's outrageously funny.

Using the Irish vernacular—or the Donleavy version thereof—(a most dangerous thing to be doing and for sure something the Irish will club him over the head about in print if not also in person should he find himself alone in a bog at night), and without sentiment but plenty of burlesque, he stages ribald introductions to a dozen kinds of Irishmen and women. Explaining why they are the way they are, with suitable warnings, admonitions, and raucous descriptions, he ends up with a beguiled acceptance of the foibles of a beloved and frustrating land.

Early on in the book, Mr. Donleavy quotes an announcement he heard once on the Dublin-Sligo train: "For the benefit of those travelers who are on the wrong train and who want to proceed to Belfast this is to inform them that this is the train to Sligo." That announcement sets the tone for the rest of the book.

Your man, J.P., is not gentle with any of his characters, but his most vicious attack lashes out at the builders of the new Irish "cottage," the stone, stucco, and brick eyesores that dot the outskirts of cities and blight the countryside with their "multi-colored stonework...remote controlled dancing tassels on the window shades...not

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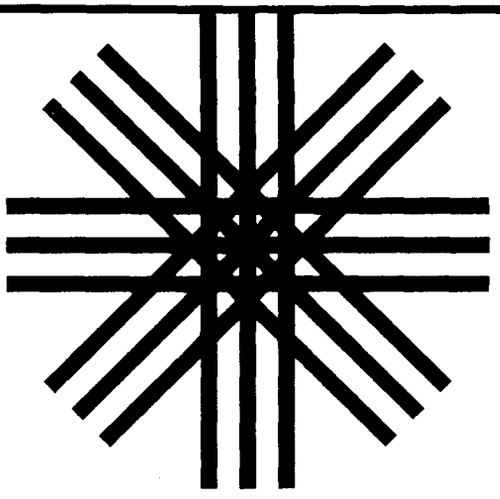
to mention the plastercast life-sized eagles, wings outstretched, that would knock your hat off as they sit on the verge of going airborne...And let me tell you further that if you press the bell which glows even in the darkest night, you may be sure that the button will be capable of bringing alive chimes in the household to the tune of 'Ave Maria.'"

Mind you, the rest of the world is burdened by such eyesores, but Mr. Donleavy (and I) think that the Irish countryside is the most beautiful in the world and was, until a few years ago, left alone in its simple beauty. Even though we both know that for the inhabitants of the new cottages, with their electronic tassels and their modern conveniences, life is infinitely easier, cleaner, warmer, and cozier. Still, it seems a terrible shame that the new affluence of the country didn't bring with it an elegant sense of design.

As every book on Ireland must have, there is a short history lesson, where Donleavy is at his best, describing the demise of the Anglo-Irish gentry. When a Big House owner asks, in his practiced stage Irish (since he has learned that his staff won't do anything quickly or even at all if addressed in a plummy English accent): "Ah begorra Paddy now how do them cattle be faring over beyond?" And the answer: "Sir I have just this second every last one of them counted and there be not a bother on them. They'd only be two heifers or is it the three, gone missing."

The three gone missing finally add up to a bankrupt estate, and so your impoverished gentleman, having already sold the trees, the good silver, and the paintings, begins parceling off the land and "the days in your life do be flying by like lightning and your feet do tiptoe unnoticed towards your grave always nicely situated down its peacefully sylvan dell." Pretty soon, what was once an elegant, austere Georgian mansion, filled with cheerful fox-hunting, shooting, drinking, and carousing gentry, now lies empty and forlorn, and local cattle (including the three gone missing) roam through the spacious drawing rooms, the libraries, the dining rooms; the kitchens become grand places for pigsties and roosting hens.

And beware, oh beware, you innocent American tourist, if your eye falls on one of these grand ruins and you take it into your naive, simpleton head to go out and buy it, and restore it to its former grandeur. You will have the encouragement and advice of your local real estate agent (with whom you spent the afternoon in the pub), whose brother-in-law is the general contractor. Promises will be made of miracles: plumbing to put Niagara to shame, state-of-the-art electrical systems, a watertight slate roof with a lifetime guarantee, and plasterwork restoration to equal the great Francini Brothers, ah sure, and all done for a song and in a season. Oh, beware, for you will have fallen into a state of suspended action known in Ireland as "Sure, we'll be on the job tomorrow," and your gentle soul and quiet demeanor will crumble and fall away as you rage and scream but all for naught. The good nature of your foreman will never be jarred throughout the torrents of abuse you hurl at him, nor will he be in the slightest moved towards completion of the project. You, on the other hand, will never be the same again. Your faith in mankind, God, Ireland, and your



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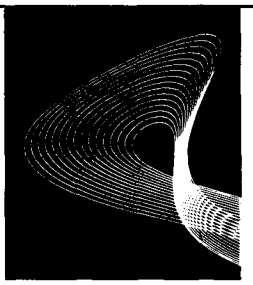

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Mr. Donleavy loses his stride when he starts describing the American couple who come to Ireland for their holidays and are totally confused and bemused by what they hear and see. Perhaps he has lived in Ireland for too long now, but "Harry and Mabel" aren't quite believable. Nevertheless, the last scene in the book, in which they become embroiled in a hotel bedroom *ménage* following the rigors of a day at the Dublin Horse Show, complete with mistaken identities, foiled gallantry, booted by knickerless maidens, and an unloosened stream of fire extinguisher foam over all, is vintage Donleavy—an Irish Feydeau farce, and a wonderful gallop to the end of a very funny book, perfect for a good summer's end read.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

GOD, DEATH, ART & LOVE
The Philosophical Vision of Ingmar Bergman
Robert E. Lauder
Paulist Press, $11.95,198 pp.

James W. Hickey

Neurotic, introspective, Ingmar Bergman has never concealed his personal obsessions. Son of a repressive clergyman, the seventy-one-year-old director has broached philosophical questions in over sixty films. Often, Bergman's intimate movies reprise the same compelling themes: his desperate need to be comforted by a silent—perhaps nonexistent—God, the cold certainty of death, the raw cunning of human betrayal, and a desolate search for meaning.

Characters in a Bergman movie may be moderately well-off, but economic privilege does not shield them from inner torment. In their deepest fears, they regard life as a black hole of indifference and inhumanity. The emotionally distant father in *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961) fails at committing suicide because the prospect of that infinite abyss terrifies him. Later he reveals, "Out of my emptiness something was born which I hardly dare touch or give a name to. A love." But it is because the love needs to be realized—not because it is a gift from a caring God—that the struggle for purpose goes on.

The plight of intelligence peering into that vast emptiness brings a double anguish—the sterility it finds there and an affirmation which it nevertheless still craves. In *Winter Light* (1963) a clergyman no longer believes in "a god who guaranteed me every imaginable security.... A god I'd...fabricated with my own hands." Fettered by a loss of faith, his cynicism is searing:

"What if God doesn't exist? What difference does it make?...Life becomes

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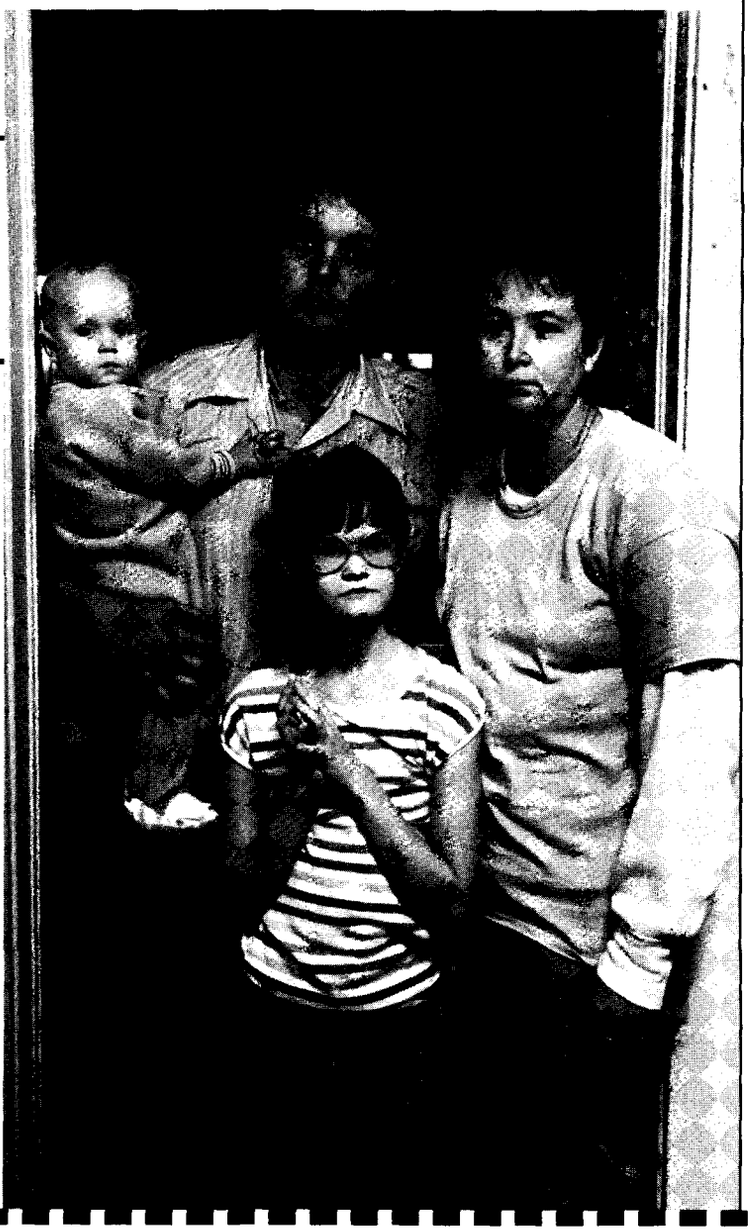

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something we can understand. What a relief! And death—extinction, dissolution of body and soul. People's cruelty, their loneliness, their fear—everything becomes self-evident—transparent. Suffering is incomprehensible, so it needn't be explained."

God and death are as one in Bergman's dismal abyss. And yet Antonious, the knight in *The Seventh Seal* (1957), cries, "Why can't I kill God within me? Why does he live on in this painful and humiliating way even though I curse him out of my heart? Why, in spite of everything, is he a baffling reality that I can't shake off?" The only humanity a Bergman character knows is raging within the self, and starving for want of companionship.

Love is possible between Bergman's characters, but becomes less an outlet for hope with each successive film. In Bergman's later works, tormented reason and irrational needs plummet headlong into the abysmal chaos. No pat resolution graces *Persona* (1966), *The Passion of Anna*, *The Touch* (1971), *The Serpent's Egg (1977)*: rendered impotent by indecision and disgust, Bergman's characters are left to stew in their own bewilderment.

For all this existential gloom and doom, the unflinching candor and intensity of his films are matched by a compulsion to find meaning. Art *is* an outlet for expressing the problem, for fanning the fragile love that might otherwise perish. Bergman fills his stories with actors, magicians, photographers, and circus performers. But he does not regard the interpreting of art as an answer; only the *doing*. "As for the interpretation, you can interpret it any way you like.... Images mean different things to different people," Bergman has said.

No, one needn't dig too deeply to find references to God, death, art, and love in Ingmar Bergman's films. But this new book by Robert E. Lauder barely looks in the right direction. A philosophy teacher at a Catholic university, Lauder allies himself with Aquinas as he eschews "all philosophies of skepticism" and, with a catechism's certainty, announces, "To claim that reality is absurd and then live as though it were meaningful is to live in a contradictory fashion." Bergman buffs would concur, for it sums up the existential dilemma. But Lauder offers the premise outright, as a Scholastic proof of a benign and reasonable deity.

Throughout, Lauder's haste and hyperbole distort Bergman's clear intentions. When he describes "the rape and murder of a lovely, innocent young girl" in *The Virgin Spring*, Lauder ignores Bergman's pungent equation between her innocence and her self-centeredness. Likewise, he refers to the antagonist in *The Seventh Seal* as "the ogre of death," though Bergman takes pains to endow death with ascetic refinement. To prove that "love somehow conquers death," Lauder alludes to a carnival wagon in *The Seventh Seal* on which a skeleton mask is prominently displayed. "In the face of love between Jof and Mia," he observes, "death is reduced to a hollow mask." More likely (and most obviously), the mask is a reminder that, for all their love, the threat of death is omnipresent in the form of the plague.

Concerning one of Bergman's made-for-television movies, Lauder extols, "The master of the close-up, Bergman uses this technique very effectively in

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Scenes from a Marriage (1973). The effect of the close-up is to force a kind of claustrophobic effect on the viewer." The more obvious explanation is that television screens require a larger, simpler image than do movie screens, so a made-for-television movie becomes a blare of close-ups when it is projected in a theater. If anything, shooting for television prompted Bergman to abandon detailed sets in his later films, making them visually less absorbing than the black-and-white features. Lauder is too heady with cursory praise to consider such details.

By admitting that he disagrees with Bergman's nihilism, Lauder prepares us for a possibly bracing debate. But he steers clear of both controversy and scholarship. Having dispatched skepticism so parochially, Lauder alludes to examples of it without deeper commentary (as a proof of alleged objectivity?), and otherwise pads his pages proclaiming the obvious. Love is important in life, he informs us; death is mentioned in scenes from this-or-that film, we are told. Library sources are accepted at face value, cut-and-paste style, and other books on Bergman are "liberally paraphrased." A redundant and plodding description of the end of *The Magician* (1985) is especially embarrassing. Also, conspicuously missing are an index, a bibliography, and a developed point of view.

"Another book about Ingmar Bergman. Why?" begins the author's introduction. "With a touch of philosophical whimsy I am tempted to answer my rhetorical question with another question: Why not?" For serious Bergman fans, Lauder's *God, Death, Art & Love* elicits a less bemused reply to his glib, if consistent, retort.

A serious study of "Bergman's philosophical vision" and teachings may yet prove interesting, but this facile text falls painfully far from the mark. The reader is advised to seek out studies by Birgitta Steene (*Ingmar Bergman*, 1968), Philip Mosley (*Ingmar Bergman: The Cinema as Mistress*, 1981), Bruce F. Kawin (*Mindscreen*, 1978), and Jorn Donner (*The Films of Ingmar Bergman*, 1972)—who are aware that Bergman's "vision" involves more than what he sees through the lens of his camera.

BREATHES LIFE OFF THE PAGE

WOMEN WRITERS AT WORK
The Paris Review Interviews
Edited by George Plimpton
Introduction by Margaret Atwood
Viking Penguin, $18.95, $9.95 paper, 512 pp.

Robert E. Hosmer, Jr.

Since its founding in 1953, *The Paris Review* has held a special place in the world of publishing; created by a group of young Americans that included Peter Matthiessen, George Plimpton, Thomas Guinzburg, and Donald Hall, it has printed generous selections of first-rate, sometimes experimental, "creative writing" in its quarterly issues, often discerning important new writers (both Philip Roth and Samuel Beckett had their first published short stories in *The Paris Review*) and sustaining established writers (Calvino, Faulkner, Kerouac, Genet, and Brodsky).

"Writers at Work" has been a regular feature of the *The Paris Review*; set among the short stories, poems, plays, essays, sketches, and photographs in each issue are now-famous interviews on the art of poetry and fiction. With extraordinary generosity, tact, and knowledge, interviewers have probed the very special world of the creative spirit; writers have had the rare opportunity to speak at length about their craft, their lives, their colleagues—in sum, about whatever they'd like. The result has been a regular feature of such success that a number of the interviews have been published periodically as the *Writers at Work* series; up until recently eight volumes had appeared, each with a dozen or so interviews. Now *Women Writers at Work* joins the ranks.

Women Writers at Work presents interviews with fifteen women writers—poets, novelists, playwrights, and essayists—of provocative diversity: eleven are American, one is Anglo-Irish, one Danish, one Irish, and one South African. Their diversity extends beyond the geographical and artistic, for they nearly span the century in their work: to move from Marianne Moore, Dorothy Parker, and Isak Dinesen to Edna

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O'Brien and Elizabeth Hardwick is to travel rather a long way indeed. And the first interviews (Parker, Dinesen—1956) took place nearly thirty years before the last (Cynthia Ozick, 1985). In a perceptive and judicious introduction Margaret Atwood sets things right; we are clearly mistaken, she tells us, if we think we can neatly categorize all these women, for "what these writers have in common is not their diverse responses to the category 'woman writer' [and indeed they are diverse], but their shared passion toward the category 'writer.'"

Women Writers at Work offers a revealing record not only of that diversity, but of the similarities of these myriad talents. Some of the writers, like Eudora Welty and Marianne Moore, are guilelessly forthcoming, answering questions fully and without hesitation. Others, like Joyce Carol Oates (who answered questions by letter) and Cynthia Ozick (who typed most of her responses in the presence of her interviewer) seem too careful, nearly distrustful, in "conversation." Certainly Mary McCarthy's comments and responses seem (much like those of her archenemy Lillian Hellman) disingenuous fictions crafted to fit an image retrospectively fabricated. Some writers (Welty and Moore spring to mind again), are sweet, generous, forgiving, and humble, both about themselves and their art. Others are rather bad-tempered, hostile, even downright nasty: Dorothy Parker describes Harold Ross as "a professional lunatic"; Mary McCarthy, never at a loss for a compliment, labels Simone de Beauvoir "a mind totally bourgeois turned inside out"; and Rebecca West appraises Somerset Maugham thus: "He couldn't write for toffee, bless his heart." While some discern difficulties in being a "woman writer" (Joan Didion: "a woman who wrote novels [in the late 1950s and 1960s] had no particular role; Edna O'Brien: "...a woman writer has a double dose of masochism: the masochism of the woman and that of the artist"), others would agree with Elizabeth Hardwick that there are "no special difficulties to being a woman writer."

As important as these differences may be, what these women share is much more striking. Nearly all believe that a story or poem or play is "given" to them: for Moore, "a felicitous phrase springs to mind"; for Didion it's an image that shimmers on the retina that sends the story-telling impulse to the brain; for Nadine Gordimer, "four or five pages of very scrappy notes" become a "whole book" in the course of the writing. And the gift brings a compulsion well-described by Welty: "...in the writing, I have to just keep going straight through with only the thing in mind and what it dictates."

But above, before, and beyond everything else these fifteen women share that passion Atwood mentions, an intense and fervid commitment to writing so strong that Katherine Anne Porter speaks of it

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REVIEWERS

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JAMES W. HICKEY *has taught writing and film at the State University of New York in Purchase, Marymount College, Iona College, and Fordham University.*

ROBERT E. HOSMER, JR., *teaches in the department of English language and literature at Smith College.*

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Writers revealed—in paperback

Writers Revealed, reviewed by John Breslin in *Commonweal* July 13, is now available in paperback for $8.95 from Peter Bedrick Books. The book is edited by Rosemary Hartill.

as a vocation; writing "is an act of faith," she says, and even the wisecracking Dorothy Parker might agree: "I want so much to write well, though I know I don't," she pleads with the anguish of a scrupulous postulant. For Edna O'Brien, "writing is a vocation, like being a nun or a priest." And Cynthia Ozick, a writer so unlike Porter, Parker, and O'Brien, says much the same thing, only in secularized terms: "A writer is simply another citizen with a profession...someone born with a gift" and "the inner voice that never, never, never shuts up. Never." All these writers are united in a conviction of what their art can do, and Katherine Anne Porter speaks for them all when she says, "nothing is pointless, and nothing is meaningless, if the artist will face it."

The interviews in *Women Writers at Work* are absorbing reading and not just for specialists; while they do constitute a valuable literary and cultural document, they go beyond that to render present the hearts and minds of gifted women. Two interviews have particular poignancy: Barbara Thompson's exchanges with Porter enable the reader to feel as though he or she had been in that Georgetown drawing room on a midsummer's afternoon in 1963; and Barbara Kevles's interview with the tormented Anne Sexton is heartbreaking in its delineation of any anguished spirit who knows that "pain engraves a deeper meaning."

This particular collection of interviews reminds us of some writers we have neglected, undervalued, or cast aside (Porter, Sexton) and of others whose full measure we still have time to take while they remain with us (Welty and O'Brien). When Edna O'Brien praises Chekhov—"Read Chekhov. He does not write, he breathes life off the page"—she offers an apt evaluation of this collection: it breathes life off the page. Read it. □

IN BRIEF

SEED OF SARAH: MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR, *by Judith Magyar Isaacson, University of Illinois Press, $18.95, 171 pp.*

This story is almost too good to be true: the nearly miraculous deliverance from the Nazi furnaces of a stunningly beautiful, refined, middle-class Hungarian Jew—nineteen when she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau with her family— with scarcely a hair of her head being singed, her mind and body still whole at deliverance.

It is a story compellingly told, carefully researched—with maps and telling family photographs, rescued from a secret hiding place—and written in an accomplished English that never falters. There is, in fact, a lilt about the whole enterprise, both in content and exposition, that must make it singular in Holocaust literature. As the

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author wrote her American father-in-law in heavily Hungarianized English in late 1945: "Still I cannot tell you, that I was very unhappy in the lagers [camps]. The whole thing was so terrible that in some strange way it was more amusing than I could expect."

Yet you cannot come away from Isaacson's tale without once again sensing not only the utter heinousness of the Holocaust, but the uniqueness of every story associated with it. And this one—despite its beauty, its relatively happy ending (she, her mother, and an aunt are freed in Germany by the Americans, she marries one of her dashing deliverers, they have a family in Maine, and the author becomes dean of students at Bates College), its almost Americanized nonchalance—leaves you trembling in a very particular sense. Because there is no answer as to why this Judith Magyar Isaacson escaped.

There are insights. The incredible smile of fate on more numerous occasions than is statistically plausible; the resilience of women, who as a group bond and protect one another in a manner more naturally efficient and successful than men; and even the love of poetry and music that could lead Isaacson to whistle Mozart while forced to fill artillery shells in a Nazi munitions factory. No final resort to faith ("We used to be scolded by our rabbi for being 'Yom Kippur Jews'—just as we are in Auburn, Maine, today"). Insights, but no answer. (Again, writing her yet-to-be-met father-in-law: "I am always afraid to realize that all, all of them are dead....All Jewish children, young mothers, and old people almost from whole Europe.")

How then to live to tell this story so beautifully, to do it without the marks of anguish or of chains (in a mix-up, she was even spared being tattooed at Auschwitz)? This is a mystery, the mystery of deliverance. It is worthy of the prophet Daniel and resonant with his canticle. P.J.

KING'S PAWN: THE MEMOIRS OF GEORGE H. DUNNE, S.J., *by George H. Dunne, Loyola University Press, $19.95, 502 pp.*

This is the colorful life story of an aggressive priest-activist who was intent on the right things and often ahead of his time. Father Dunne's much reprinted "Sin of Segregation," published in *Commonweal* in 1945, is a case in point. Dunne's unexpected recall from his mission in China in the 1930s was only the first of the many frustrations this determined advocate endured at the hands of certain bishops and various Jesuit superiors.

Dunne does not mince words in expressing his opinion of corrupt union leaders, business moguls, and various religious adversaries who, he felt, thwarted or harassed him—in such communities as Hollywood-Los Angeles, and at such universities as St. Louis and Santa Clara. Several of his *Commonweal* articles, periodically cited in the course of these lively memoirs, led in one way or another to unhappy confrontations. The way of the crusader for human rights and social justice is often a thorny one.

There are a number of peaceful interludes in this extensive narrative: Dunne's moving account of his call to the Jesuit priesthood, his many lay and clerical friendships, his training of the Peace Corps at Georgetown, his leadership of Sodepax —the international ecumenical peace and development association—in its early days, and his worldwide travels.

But *King's Pawn* achieves its greatest impact in the shorter sections describing Dunne's efforts against heavy odds. That was mostly in pursuit of the essential means of forwarding the cause of the Kingdom of God. All in all, a convincing picture of a notable career. E.S.S.

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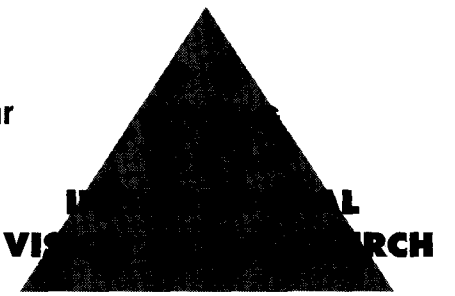

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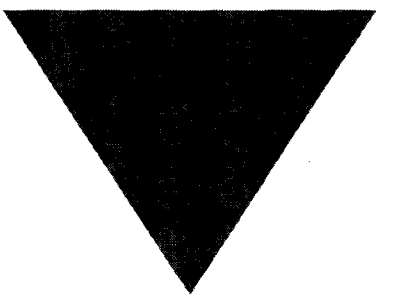

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